Min Matheson & the ILGWU • Appalachian Fiction Contest Winners • Hillbilly Bluesman Nick Stump

NOW & THEN

THE APPALACHIAN MAGAZINE

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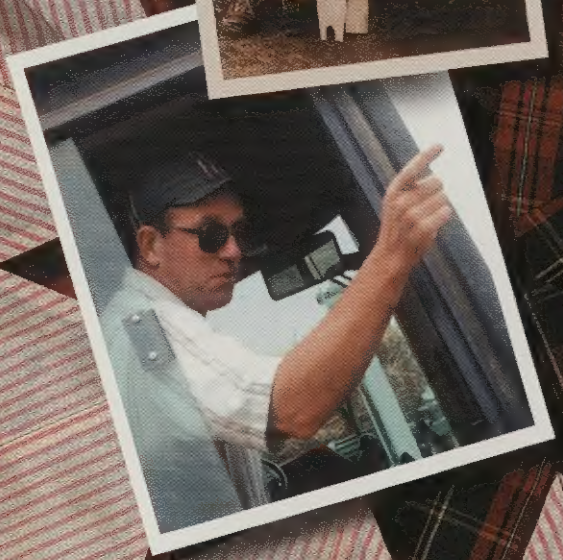
Appalachian Lives

Articles, Fiction, Essays, Poetry, and Reviews



Elements Most Often Found in Appalachian Literature

A purple-fingered, blackberry-picking girl; the haggard mother equipped with a washboard, an apron, and twelve younguns. The outsider—shunned at first, but an eventual savior to the people. A 40-year-old woman just starting over. A leather-faced farmer; boys with Marlboros who fight gamecocks and drive Camaros; a stubborn, God-fearing miner; the hard-fisted, good-hearted union organizer; the coal company owner in a pressed white suit.

Granny. Kudzu.

A preacher with a booming voice and sweat-rings under his arms; the clairvoyant elderly woman in a lavender dress and a white-frame house; the obnoxious sister who takes being Pentecostal a little too far. And the snakehandler. There are more snakehandlers in Appalachian literature than there are snakehandlers in Appalachia.

Kudzu.

The failed country singer whose wife has just left him for the insurance salesman, who lives in a split-level overlooking town. A tortured young boy who refuses to hunt; the utterly stupid hairdresser; a drunk who asks for a ride, a bacon-biscuit, or some liquor. Someone who operates a still or raises pot. Someone who has never seen an indoor toilet or electric lights. A gum-chomping waitress who calls everybody "hon."

Finally: kudzu, wildflowers, The Old Homeplace, a faded photograph, a found letter, a found diary. A calico cat, a dog who won't leave his place in the middle of the road when a car pulls up. Copperheads, soup beans, green beans, poke sallet, leatherbritches, a car on cement blocks, a well-kept graveyard. A whippoorwill. Kudzu.

—Silas D. House

Silas D. House lives in London, Ky., with his wife, Teresa, and daughters, Cheyenne and Olivia. He has placed his unpublished novel, "Clay's Quilt," with an agent. The manuscript won a grant from the Kentucky Arts Council and the Kentucky Fiction Award from the National Society of Arts and Letters. His short stories have received two Plattner Awards from Berea College and the Appalachian Story Award from M Magazine. *This particular piece grew out of a session at the Appalachian Writers Workshop at Hindman (Ky.) that House took with novelist Lee Smith.*

Cover illustration by M. Wayne Dyer, artist, designer, and professor in the department of art and design at East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tenn. The cover image is a digital illustration using as sources a hand-stitched U.S. flag and the artist's late grandmother's handmade quilt. Mrs. Mae Musselman of Salem, Va., a lifelong quilter, died in 1983. The motif symbolizes the patchwork quilt of life that is woven from the stories published in this issue of Now & Then. *The merging of the flag and the quilt was accomplished only in cyberspace. Neither the flag nor the quilt was destroyed or dismembered to produce the illustration.*

Cover layout by Hillhouse Graphic Design, Kingsport, Tenn.

Pictured (starting at the top and moving clockwise) are: Cyril Carver holding his son Ken (courtesy of Cyril and Lillian Carver); Min Matheson explaining reasons for an industry-wide strike to Wyoming Valley, Pa., garment workers, 1958 (courtesy of ILGWU/UNITE!); Peter and Polly Gott (Harvey Wang); Nick Stump (courtesy of Nick Stump); The Peacemaker, also known as Kelly Rae's father, and his Chevy convertible (Otis Martin); Mark Givens (Fred Carlisle); and Callie at three years and her sister Ollie (courtesy of Irene B. Howie).

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NOW & THEN
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Submissions of poetry, fiction, articles, personal essays, graphics, and photographs concerned with Appalachian life, past and present, are welcomed if accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope. Upcoming deadlines: Health Care — November 1, 1999 (for Spring 2000); Appalachian Accents — March 1, 2000 (for Summer 2000). **Address correspondence to:** ***Now & Then,*** Box 70556, ETSU, Johnson City TN 37614, or e-mail: Woodsidj @ etsu.edu. **Send Poetry to:** Linda Parsons Marion, 2909 Fountain Park Blvd., Knoxville TN 37917. **Send book reviews or suggestions for reviews to:** Sandy Ballard, English Dept., Carson-Newman College, Box 2059, Jefferson City TN 37760. ***Now & Then*** guidelines are available on the World Wide Web at: http://cass.etsu.edu/n&t/guidelin.htm.

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"Attention must be paid to life in this place because there is value in it for people everywhere."

—Julie McDonald

ARTICLES

12 Mark Givens: The Last Full-Time Farmer in Clover Hollow — *Fred Carlisle*

22 Against the Odds: Min Matheson and the ILGWU — *Kenneth C. Wolensky & Robert P. Wolensky*

35 Nick Stump: Proud Member of the Hillbilly Nation — *Laurene Scalf*

ESSAYS

◁ **Elements Most Often Found in Appalachian Literature** — *Silas D. House*

17 Rumors — *SG Séguret*

28 Our Bars — *Kelley Rae*

32 The Infamous Weaver Family — *Alex Whitson*

39 Callie — *Irene B. Howie*

48 Roses — *Carol Guthrie Heilman*

FICTION

3 The *Now & Then* Appalachian Fiction Competition Winners

3 The Pillar of William's Grave — *Kevin C. Stewart*

7 The Loves of Goldie Kilby — *Isabel Zuber*

POETRY

16 Lurany Oliver — *Elizabeth Howard*

20 Incoming Fire — *Dan Leidig*

27 The Cuban Poet at the Holston River — *Virgil Suarez*

31 Sergeant Father, Sir — *Tyler Parris*

34 Mountain Man — *Susan Snowden*

38 Revival — *William Miller*

42 Aunt Emmy, Little Jenny — *David Staudt*

49 Shelter — *Katherine Smith*

REVIEWS

43 *Lee Smith, Annie Dillard, and the Hollins Group: A Genesis of Writers* by Nancy Parrish — *Lana Whited*

44 *Another Country: Journeying Toward the Cherokee Mountains* by Christopher Camuto — *Thomas Rain Crowe*

44 *A Room Forever: The Life, Work, and Letters of Breece D'J Pancake* by Thomas E. Douglass — *Stephen D. Mooney*

45 *Appalachian Mountain Girl* by Rhoda Bailey Warren — *Jennifer Mullins Mooney*

46 An Appreciation of *Rocket Boys: A Memoir* by Homer H. Hickam Jr. — *Darla Dye*

Connections

Reading biographies and autobiographies is one of my favorite pasttimes. I'm one of those people who picks the longest line at the supermarket just so I can skim through as many magazine interviews as possible before I'm obliged to toss my groceries onto the conveyor belt. So working on *Now & Then's* Appalachian Lives issue — being allowed a glimpse into other people's lives, hearing them tell about their experiences in their own distinctive voices — has been a special pleasure.

Within these pages are diverse voices and experiences. There are artists and activists and teachers. Laurene Scalf profiles Kentucky native Nick Stump (p. 35), a practitioner of electric hillbilly blues and a writer. The Wolensky brothers, Kenneth and Robert, tell the remarkable story of Chicago-born union organizer Min Matheson and all she did for her adopted Northeastern Pennsylvania home despite great personal cost (p. 22). And in a moving biographical poem, Dan Leidig traces the life of friend and neighbor Cyril Carver from his beginnings as a war orphan in Wales to life as a master teacher in Southwestern Virginia (p. 20).

What I found most fascinating, though, were the various ways people of different backgrounds connected with each other. Virginia Tech professor Fred Carlisle, for example, describes the struggle of neighbor Mark Givens to make a living on a Virginia farm in his family for generations (p. 12). Carlisle describes himself as an "academic migrant," a man who has come to the mountains with his wife Barbara, both of them lacking any ties to the place they have chosen to live. This nomad, then, is writing about a man whose strong family ties to the land have "thrust" him into a way of life about which he feels both deep attachment and profound ambivalence. Opposites attract and do their best to comprehend each other.

Givens has such a difficult life because, as Carlisle observes, "the days of the diverse, relatively self-sufficient middle-sized farm in the mountains ... passed some time ago." Apparently no one told the Gotts. Living on a self-sufficient farm was just what early back-to-the-landers Peter and Polly Gott came from Pennsylvania to the North Carolina mountains to do in 1960. Their daughter, bluegrass musician SG Séguret, recounts with gentle humor in "Rumors" (p. 17) how her parents succeeded in their own quest to fit with their sometimes skeptical, often bemused and baffled mountain neighbors.

Séguret's essay illustrates a common thread running through this issue. You ask Appalachians to write about their lives, and they invariably write about kin and community (and kudzu, as Silas House facetiously suggests in "Elements Most Often Found in Appalachian Literature," inside front cover). Alex Whitson, for instance, offers a broadly humorous recollection (p. 32) about neighbors from his childhood days in Tennessee, the dimwitted Weavers. When asked to write about their lives, Appalachians, by and large, do not give you detailed tours of their own interior landscapes.

This is a part of the country where connections to the land, to family, to the past, and to community matter. Carol Guthrie Heilman in a lovely little essay, "Roses" (p. 48), muses about how the slips of red climbing roses family members have transplanted wherever they go have come to represent their connections with one another, their shared memories. But as this issue's writers know, those connections can be complex and difficult. In "Our Bars" (p. 28) and in "Callie" (p. 39), Kelly Rae and Irene Howie acknowledge with honesty and humor the complicated nature of a warm but sometimes strained family life.

What we consider to have been an inspired idea for dedicating an issue to biography and autobiography came several years ago from *Now & Then's* first editor, Fred Waage. He has our thanks.

My pleasure in editing this issue was tempered only by the hard choices we had to make. We got enough solid material to fill at least two issues of the magazine. Appalachian Lives, I suspect, will prove to be one of those themes we'll revisit before too long.

— Jane Harris Woodside, editor

Now & Then Takes a Winter Vacation

Now & Then magazine will go on hiatus for one issue this coming winter. The winter 1999 **Appalachian Health Care** issue of *Now & Then* will be postponed until the spring of 2000 (submission deadline of November 1, 1999). **Appalachian Accents,** scheduled to feature the winners of ***Now & Then's* Year 2000 Appalachian Poetry Competition,** will still be published the summer of 2000 (submission deadline of March 1, 2000).

This hiatus will permit *Now & Then* staff members to give the Center web page the sustained attention it needs and to start work on a comprehensive index for the magazine. In addition, the magazine has been selected to participate this fall in the Literary Journal Institute's One-on-One Consulting Program, organized by the New York-based Council of Literary Magazines and Presses and funded through a National Endowment for the Arts grant. This program will provide us with a consultant to help us devise and implement ways to find more potential members for the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services — and more readers for *Now & Then.*

All Center members will have their memberships extended so that they will receive three issues of the magazine. To request a revised publication schedule through the spring of 2001, call the Center at 423-439-5348, write *Now & Then,* CASS/ETSU, Box 70556, Johnson City TN 37614-0556, or visit our website at http://cass.etsu.edu/n&t/themes.htm.

We look forward to rejoining you next spring.

— JHW

Letters to the editor should be sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number to: Editor, Now & Then, *ETSU, Box 70556, Johnson City TN 37614 or e-mail woodsidj@etsu.edu. Letters may be edited for length and clarity before publication.*

If there was ever a theme issue that could provide a suitable home for a fiction competition, Appalachian Lives was it. Writers simply had to use their characters to reflect some facet of life in this far-flung region known as Appalachia.

Eighty-four writers sent in 100 entries exactly, representing all but two (Maryland and Mississippi) of the 13 Appalachian states as well as New Jersey and British Columbia, Canada. We sent on seven finalists to our distinguished judge — novelist, short story writer, and poet Robert Morgan. He had his work cut out for him. On a plane flight between his home state of North Carolina and New York, where he currently teaches at Cornell University, he read and reread the stories. "It was hard to make up my mind because the quality overall was so high," he wrote.

We're very pleased, proud, and more than a little relieved to announce that the sponsors for the 1999 competition, First Bank & Trust Co. of Abingdon, Va., and the University of Tennessee Press of Knoxville, publisher of the forthcoming *Encyclopedia of Appalachia,* have graciously agreed to serve as permanent underwriters for all of our fiction contests. This is just one more way that both of these fine regional institutions have demonstrated their interest in and support of the work of the Center for Appalachian Studies and Services. *Now & Then* and the Center will sponsor poetry competitions in even years and fiction contests in odd years. The next fiction competition will take place in the spring of 2001.

— JHW

THE FIRST BANK & TRUST FIRST PRIZE

Kevin C. Stewart, Harrisonburg, Virginia
Sponsor: First Bank & Trust Co., Abingdon, Virginia

I chose "The Pillar of William's Grave" for first prize because of its dramatic intensity and grotesque beauty. The story grabs you from the first and never lets up. And besides its drama, it has something important to say by implication about our times and our region — and our obsessions.

— Robert Morgan

The Pillar of William's Grave

Thunder trailed off, and Rachel heard T.W.'s truck climbing the driveway. She sat in the kitchen, sipping coffee. Stomping up the stairs, T.W.'s footsteps rattled the aluminum windows in the walls of their mobile home. Rain hammered the roof. Pushing through the front door, T.W. cradled something small, the size of a baby, wrapped in a mover's blanket. His hair was damp and messy. Two days of whiskers covered his narrow face. Drying mud caked his flannel shirt and bluejeans. "What is that?" she said, pointing at the bundle, but she knew.

"Rachel," he said, "you gotta promise not to go crazy."

She approached him, reached for the blanket.

"Rachel, hear me out before you get any wild ideas."

She lifted a flap of the blanket and saw William, her son, who'd been buried three days ago. His eyelids were bruise blue, his skin greenly cold and rubbery. He smelled musty and sour, despite the embalmed scent that rose from him. His brown peach-fuzzed scalp was sucked into the soft spot of his head. She yanked him from T.W.'s arms. "Why did you do this?" she said, too angry to cry.

"I got to, Rachel," he said. "He belongs in the Lilly cemetery. I got lumber in the truck for a coffin."

She bolted for the door, but he cut her off, grabbing her arm. "Is this how it's gonna be, Rachel?"

On her arm, she felt her heartbeat under his grip. She looked him in the eyes, dark as wet blacktop. He released her, bit his lower lip, blinking away what appeared to be tears. Crowsfeet cut deeper into his face than she'd ever noticed before. He stepped to the door and jammed his hands into his pockets, looking outside. "I couldn't stand it no more," he said. "Daddy and Granddaddy both got buried in a town cemetery, and they don't belong there. Not when five generations

Pushing through the front door, T.W. cradled something small, the size of a baby, wrapped in a mover's blanket.

Courtesy of Kevin Stewart

Kevin Stewart

Kevin Stewart set out to be an engineer, but then he discovered books. "I didn't really grow up around literature," he says of his childhood in Princeton, W.Va. Just as he was finishing his bachelor of science in civil and architectural engineering at Bluefield State College in Bluefield, W.Va., various people recommended books to him. Then Bruce Springsteen piqued his interest further. "I'd hear Springsteen talk about Flannery O'Connor, you know, and Steinbeck and I said, 'Hmm. If Springsteen likes them, maybe I'll like them, too.'"

Stewart was born in Maine while his father was in the Air Force, but the family soon returned to home territory, specifically to Princeton, W.Va., to live within 30 minutes of grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins from both sides of his family. "The only reason I'm not a West Virginian by birth is my parents didn't make it back in time," he laughs.

After leaving Bluefield, he earned a bachelor of arts degree in English from Concord College in Athens, W.Va., a master's degree from Radford University in Radford, Va., and a master of fine arts from the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville. He's held a number of teaching positions, most recently at Charleston Southern University in Charleston, S.C., and at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Va.

So far, his decision to abandon engineering for English seems to be working out. He is currently finishing a novel set in West Virginia, *The Son of a Million Fathers,* a finalist for the 1999 Heekin Group Foundation's James Fellowship for a novel-in-progress. In addition, he's won several awards for his fiction and has had stories and poetry published in various journals, including *Interim, Wind Magazine,* and *Wellspring.*

This August he will be leaving the mountains for Baton Rouge, La., where he will teach at Louisiana State University. He sincerely hopes he won't lose his sense of direction—literally. "I lived in Charleston, S.C., for a year, and the weirdest thing about it is that while I usually have a good sense of direction, when I get somewhere that's flat, I lose track of where I am. Flatness distracts me. I can't figure out which way's north or south. With the mountains, they kind of point it all out to you."

He'll admit to being an Appalachian writer. "I don't know how I feel about the label all the time. Sometimes it's aggravating when a reviewer of a Denise Giardina novel calls her among the best of the Appalachian writers or West Virginia writers. It's as if they're saying, 'For a West Virginian, she's pretty good.' I don't like pigeonholes. Still, I do try to write stories that the people I know, the people who are from where I'm from can empathize with. That's where I'm from, and that's what I write about."

—JHW

before them are in the old farmplace." He turned to her. "I gotta start righting things now, or our land ain't gonna do nothing but turn into plain old dirt."

"Your family don't even own that land no more, T.W."

"I know," he said. "But don't worry. It'll be over with soon."

"It was already over with once." She took William back to his room and laid him in his crib where, last Sunday morning, she'd found him dead, his cold cheek to the mattress. SIDS, the doctor called it.

A wide grin stretched across his face, revealing his slight underbite. "I bet I'm causing chills to run up and down your spine, ain't I?"

Crib death, her mom had said. How could a child forget to breathe? And why did it happen on the one night she'd actually slept instead of tossing and turning, waiting for him to cry? She hated herself for sleeping, and she hadn't slept well since.

Now T.W. had forced William's death back on her, and she had no idea what to do about it. She was afraid to run, afraid of what T.W. might do—a man willing to exhume his dead son is capable of anything.

From her closet, she removed her good black cotton dress with the floral print that she'd worn to William's funeral. She took off her nightgown and panties and slipped the dress on, the long skirt falling around her ankles. She didn't wear anything else. She didn't want anything holding her.

In the living room, T.W. had hauled two sawhorses, a half-dozen 2 x 4s, and two pressure-treated plywood sheets inside, leaning the lumber against the couch. He looked at her dress when he came through the front door again, carrying his circular saw and a carpenter's L-square. "What're you wearing that for?" he said.

"They's gonna be a funeral, ain't they?"

"Out in the woods," he said. "We'll have to work in the rain, looks like. Better pack a change of clothes, some towels."

He laid a sheet of plywood on the sawhorses and measured rectangles. Then the saw screamed, and a roostertail of sawdust flew into the air. She turned away to pack the clothes.

An hour later, T.W. finished nailing the coffin together, and they laid William in it. T.W. covered it with the lid, lined up the edges, and nailed it shut.

"We'd better wait 'til dark to carry him out," he said. The kitchen clock read 11:13. It wouldn't get dark until around 7:00.

She looked at T.W., at his eyes, as he stared at the coffin. Adrenaline coursed through them, widening his pupils like whiskey would.

The energy of his eyes caught her up the way they did three years ago when she had met him. She was a hostess at the Western Sizzlin near the interstate. A tall, lanky Air Force airman in his dress blues walked in, staring right into her eyes. Nervous, she glanced away from him and seated him in a corner booth on the other side of the dining area. But she felt him watching her the entire time he was there.

Finally, as he paid his bill, a wide grin stretched across his face, revealing his slight underbite. "I bet I'm causing chills to run up and down your spine, ain't I?"

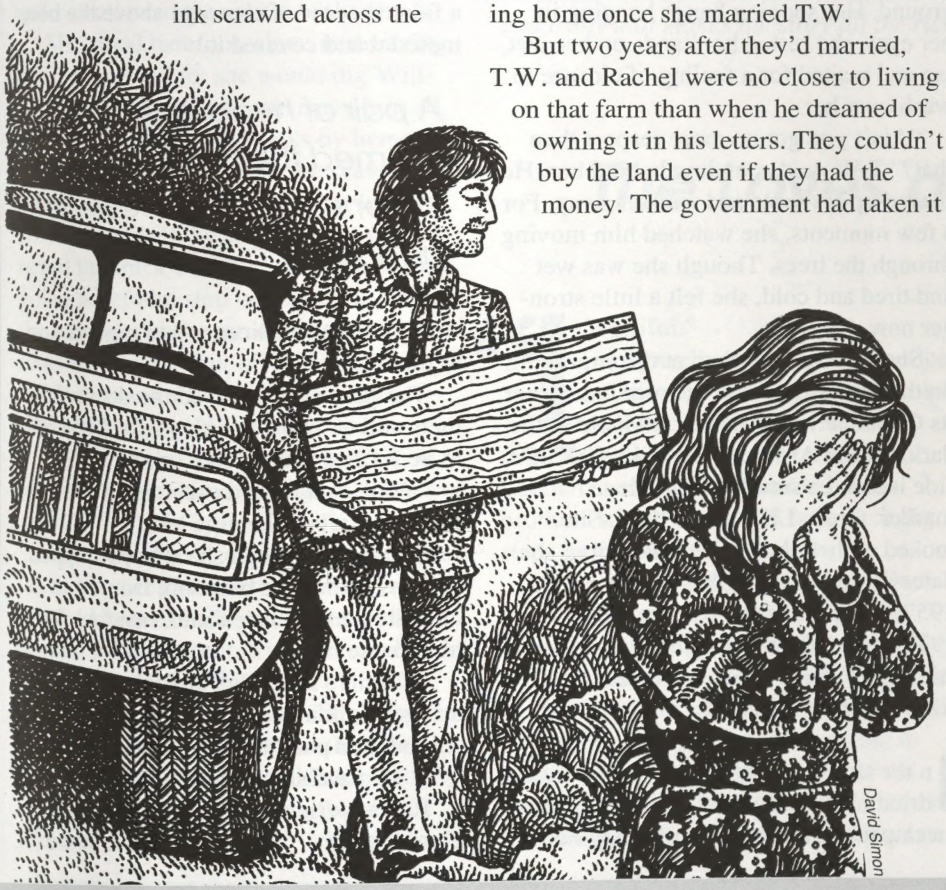
"I just get nervous when somebody stares at me is all."

"You must get nervous a lot, pretty as you are."

She smiled, and her face flushed.

"By the way, I'm T.W. Lilly," he said. "Airman T.W. Lilly, USAF. And I'd fly a jet plane through that front door there to get you to go out with me."

They went out every night during his two-week leave, then wrote constantly. The words in his letters lacked the energy of his eyes, but she felt them in the black ink scrawled across the paper. She could imagine lifting the strings of cursive writing from the pages and rolling them into small, glossy black balls with the same dark sheen as T.W.'s pupils.



From his letters, she learned the history of his family and their farm down in Monroe County and that he planned to buy it back, start his own family there. Fate brought him to her, he wrote. She was the one to share that farm with him, and they would make sure that land would only be in Lilly hands and only Lillys would be on that land. Rachel liked

"I gotta start righting things now, or our land ain't gonna do nothing but turn into plain old dirt."

the idea of being a part of a long family line. She was never really close to her own family—her folks split up and went their separate ways, leaving Rachel with her grandfather. He was moved to a nursing home once she married T.W.

But two years after they'd married, T.W. and Rachel were no closer to living on that farm than when he dreamed of owning it in his letters. They couldn't buy the land even if they had the money. The government had taken it for a camping area off of the Allegheny Trail. For a long time, T.W. left that fact out. Now he'd dug William up and was going to bury him on government land.

Standing at the living room window, she looked outside at the mountain north of town, buried in gray mist, and wondered if the trees had reached up and grabbed the clouds, holding them over the valley, wringing out the rain, as if God had instructed nature to make this day even more miserable.

In Monroe County, T.W. turned down a muddy road rutted with gullies. As the truck pitched and lurched, the coffin bumped against the inside of the bed and tailgate. It sickened Rachel to think William was bouncing around in that wooden box, his blanket unwrapping.

Overhanging blackberry branches scratched down the truck's sides. Tall seeded grass, water-glazed and bent over from the rain, sparkled between the ruts; then the truck mowed them down. They were stopped by a metal sign screwed to the top slat of an aluminum gate: "Authorized Vehicles Only Beyond This Point." T.W. swung the truck around in a wide spot, then backed up to the gate and shut the truck off. They hopped out.

"I'll have to carry it from here," he said, opening the camper lid and the tailgate.

"You'll have to carry *it?*" she said.

"It's all right," he said. "It ain't heavy."

He pulled the coffin from the truck and started toward the cemetery. She glared at him for several moments, then grabbed a pickaxe and shovel and followed him.

In the rain-beaten graveyard, she sat on a wet log. The woods were rich with the smell of rain and soaked earth and moss. She watched T.W. swing the pickaxe in the beam of a flashlight he'd placed atop a gravestone, glittered streaks of rain slanting in the light. A mountain laurel filled the background, its long, oval leaves drooping.

He pried up clumps of sopping mud and swung again, brown water splashing. He wouldn't stop to rest, as if stopping would give him a chance to change his mind. His waterlogged T-shirt was pasted

to his flesh. As he worked, she watched his wiry muscles tense, contract, and then relax. Maybe his single-minded family pride would deplete with each flex of his muscles. How deep would he have to go before he'd toiled that pride away, piling it beside that grave in each shovelful of

It sickened Rachel to think William was bouncing around in that wooden box, his blanket unwrapping.

mud? She hoped he would dig to China, if that's what it took.

He stopped about waist-deep.

"I thought it was supposed to be six feet," she said.

"That's for grownups." He climbed out of the hole.

Beside the grave, she dropped to her knees and looked in. Mud-clotted roots dangled from the jagged walls. The hole looked bottomless. She remembered a church flier about the rapture. In cemeteries, people wearing white gowns rose from graves, pulled through the soil, gleaned by the invisible hand of God. She knew it could never happen. There was a permanence to a grave. Only someone driven almost crazy, like T.W., could pull a body from the ground. God wasn't crazy.

T.W. grabbed the box by both ends and dropped it, splat against the bottom of the hole. A splash of mud sprayed her cheek. She wiped it off with her wet dress sleeve, grit scraping her skin.

"You wanna say some words?" he asked.

She remained on her knees, looking at him. "What for, T.W.? What for?"

"Suit yourself." He tilted his head skyward, closed his eyes, and clasped his hands just below his navel. She wanted to believe the water streaming down the bridge of his nose, over his cheeks, and channeling the lines in his face was tears, but she knew it was only rain.

"Lord, thank you for letting us bring William home," T.W. said. "Now let him rest in peace. Amen."

When his eyes fluttered open, she said, "I feel like we're criminals."

He glanced at her. "Sometimes the right thing seems wrong at the time."

After filling the grave in, he examined his work, a tired smugness in his face. He looked as if he'd just slickered her at something. She wanted to fight back. She stood and grabbed the pickaxe. Hefting the heavy T-blade high above her head, she turned toward a tall, thin tombstone behind her.

"What the hell you doing?" he said.

She swung the tool, stepping into the swing, and it clanked against the stone, knocking it cockeyed.

"Rachel, quit it. That's my great-grandfather."

She swung again, and this time a corner of the stone broke off, a brick-sized chunk. It flew several feet, landing with a spongy muffle on the wet leaves. She dropped the pickaxe and lifted the piece of stone from the ground and carried it to the head of William's grave. She fell to her knees and smashed the stone into the mud until it barely stubbed up above the ground. Her sopping bangs hanging in her eyes, she rested her hands on her wet lap and waited for a feeling of closure to wash over her.

"Ain't you got no more respect than that?" T.W. said, standing behind her. He picked up his tools and walked away. For a few moments, she watched him moving through the trees. Though she was wet and tired and cold, she felt a little stronger now.

She stood and looked at the engraving on the tombstone with the missing corner, its Gothic lettering barely readable in the dark woods: Arnold Lilly 1843-1907. Beside it stood a smaller, less ornate marker: Grace Lilly 1853-1939. She looked at the other stones: all Lillys, the dates started in the 1860s and ended in 1957, except for one: Aubert Lilly 1939-1970. It was the most recent grave, except for William's. She shivered, then followed T.W.

In the truck, Rachel took off her dress, dried off with a towel, and slipped her sweatpants on. She was unfolding her WVU sweatshirt when T.W. said, "Somebody's coming."

A pair of headlights roamed the field on the lower side of the road. Her heartbeat quickened.

The headlights wheeled around the curve, settling on them. She held her shirt to her bare chest. Rainwater running down the windshield glistened. The low beams flashed on. It was a white Blazer.

"It's a game warden," T.W. said, staring at the vehicle. The glint along the round edge of his eyes was as white as a crescent moon, taking the edge off of the dark gloss. "Kick the wet clothes under the seat. Let me do the talking."

The game warden pushed from the cab, pulling on a long, dark raincoat. He walked to the truck, and T.W. rolled down the window. "Got a license and registration?" he asked T.W.

"Yessir," T.W. said. The game warden shined his flashlight into the cab, across the seat, casting a yellow disk on Rachel's lap. He slowly slid the beam up over her stomach, stopping it where her arms held her shirt to her chest. She looked down at a faint shadow of cleavage above the blue material and covered it.

A pair of headlights roamed the field on the lower side of the road. Her heartbeat quickened.

T.W. gave his license and registration to the man.

The game warden read the documents, then said to T.W., "Ain't y'all a little old to be fooling around like this?"

"Well, you know how it is," T.W. laughed, "when the urge hits."

She felt as though she'd been slapped.

"Save it for the bedroom from now on," the game warden said, handing T.W. his license back.

"Yessir," T.W. said, and the game warden got back in his Blazer, turned it around, and pulled away. "Nosey bastard," T.W. said and shoved a foot into a boot.

Rachel wriggled into her shirt, then glared at him. "Why'd you tell him we

was fooling around for?"

"Had to get rid of him, didn't I?"

She felt no more significant to T.W. than the tools in the back. "I'm getting the shovel."

"What?"

"I'm digging William up. I gotta put him back."

"You're just gonna make everything wrong again."

"You're the one that's wrong, T.W."

"Rachel, trust me," he said. "One day, me and you both'll be laying right back there beside William. And all the other kids we have'll join us, too."

"They ain't gonna be no more kids," she said. "Now give me the damn shovel!"

"All right, goddammit. Git it."

As soon as she was out of the cab, mired to her ankles in mud, he started the engine and mashed the gas pedal. The truck spun forward, slamming the open passenger door shut. The tires flung clods of mud, thudding them against her and pinging them against the gate. The taillights slipped around the black edge of the curve, and the drizzle on the ground soon swallowed the sound of the truck.

She stood barefoot, alone in the rainy dark. If she had to, she would dig William up with her hands and carry him all the way back to Triple Oaks by herself. She felt as crazy as T.W. She scaled the gate, the aluminum slats cutting into the soles of her feet. Straddling the top, she heard the truck coming back. She wasn't going to let him stop her. She jumped to the ground. As she ran down the logging road, the engine shut off and the headlights dimmed a little. The truck door, then the camper lid squeaked open.

"Ain't no use digging him up," T.W. yelled. "I'll put him back again, sooner or later."

She tripped over a fallen tree limb and landed on her chest in the mud. She climbed to her hands and knees and paused for a moment, trying to catch her breath. She looked back into the headlights, at the truck door standing open. T.W. was silhouetted behind the gate.

"And I'm putting Granddaddy and my daddy back, too," he yelled. "And Mommy when she dies."

She stood and started into a trot and picked up speed, each step splashing mud and water. Her lungs and throat burned. Locust saplings and blackberry branches pricked and scratched her arms and legs. Her heartbeat and breathing fell into rhythm with her gait. She heard the drone of the rain, the rustle of tree limbs, the wind rattling the fence wire on the right edge of the road. A strong gust lashed a cold sheet of rain across her. But her face was warm with real tears.

"You hear me, Rachel?"

The echo of his voice followed her around a bend in the road, out of the headlights' glare. She heard the clank of the pickaxe pounding against the padlock and chain on the gate. Each blow rang through the wet woods until the noise stopped and the gate rasped open. The truck started, but she kept running. She had to keep running. This place had already consumed T.W. and swallowed William. If she stopped running, something vinelike would grow from the ground and encircle her ankles and root her there, holding her for those headlights to bear down on her. N&T

The University of Tennessee Press Second Prize

Isabel Zuber, Winston-Salem, North Carolina
Sponsor: University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville

"The Loves of Goldie Kilby" is a delightful story of young romance, longing, sadness, and loss. And just underneath the surface of narration, there is a touch of humor and irony that makes the story all the richer and more memorable.

—Robert Morgan

The Loves of Goldie Kilby

"It's pitiful."

They gave him the wooden wedge and the rope to carry. "You think I can't do a thing." Sun winked from Roland's ax, and the crosscut on Leonard's shoulder thrummed as his brothers strode up the hill with such big steps he could hardly keep up.

"I can take a turn with the saw. Dad lets me," he panted. But according to them, he could only help pile brush. They were eleven and thirteen and he was nine so they pretty much told him what to do.

As they climbed, he kept turning to see the two white rocks like a gate the cattle had to pass through on their way to the barn, their house getting smaller, late March light blinding the way it caught the lean-to's tin roof.

"Hurry up, Spencer." Leonard swung the ax at his side. "You'll never make a lumberman hanging back like that."

Their woods were thin. The cows browsed low branches, ate the undergrowth, leaving the ground bare and gouged. The boys knew every tree but argued anyway about which to cut, finally picking out a slim beech. Roland chopped a lead notch, and he and Leonard started

It was awful to be little. Everybody ought to be born growed up.

Elizabeth Zuber

Isabel Zuber

"I started my first novel when I was about six or seven," remembers Isabel Zuber. "It is a page-and-a-half long, and it was about the Mexican-Texas War, a subject I knew absolutely nothing about but thought was wonderful."

What inspired a first-grader to write about the Texas Revolution? "I was a little pitcher with great big ears," laughs Zuber. An only child until the birth of a younger sister, she grew up in Boone, N.C., as Isabel Eggers, daughter of Herman Eggers, longtime registrar at Appalachian State University (ASU), and his wife Elizabeth. In addition to her parents, the house was full of her father's brothers and assorted cousins who lived with them during the Depression years while they attended ASU. "I was the only child with a lot of adults talking around me — which probably warped me totally.

"I've always written something," she continues. "It's been different things — essays, poetry, journals. The most recent attempt is the novel. The story, 'The Loves of Goldie Kilby' is about characters who also appear in the novel."

An agent is currently looking at her manuscript, entitled "Salt." "It's out there struggling," she sighs. If published, the novel will join her two books of poetry, *Oriflamb,* winner of the North Carolina Writers' Network Chapbook Contest Prize and published in 1987, and 1997's *Winter's Exile,* a finalist in the Persephone Prize competition. Her short stories have won awards, among them the Irene Leach Award from the Irene Leach Memorial of Norfolk, Va., and the Lee Smith Prize for Fiction from the Appalachian Writers Association. *The Crucible, The Arts Journal,* and *Sand Hills Review* have all published her work, and another story is forthcoming in the fall issue of *Shenandoah.*

Now living in Winston-Salem, N.C., Zuber is the circulation librarian at Wake Forest University's C. Smith Reynolds Library. Genealogical research a relative conducted recently revealed that she had deeper roots in her adopted hometown than she had ever dreamed. "I discovered that some of my ancestors were Piedmont Moravians. Actually I live only three or four minutes away from a church where my seven-times-great-grandmother is buried, and I didn't know I was related to her. It came as a great shock because I'd always thought of myself as completely 'mountain.'"

There is no doubt in Zuber's mind that she is essentially Appalachian. "I can't help thinking of myself that way, and I'm proud of it," she asserts. When it comes to writing, though, the picture gets a little more complex. "The fiction is mostly Appalachian. The poetry? No. I don't know what the source of the poetry is, but it doesn't come out of the oral tradition I heard as a child. But yes, a lot of the fiction is Appalachian because it came from the stories I'd heard and just because I really love the mountains."

— JHW

the saw. Sticky, nut-scented dust fell to each side.

"Gimme a turn, Rol." He laid the rope on the ground and wiped his hands on his pants. "I know I can do it."

"Out of the way, Spence." Leonard's wrists popped out of his sleeves with each pull. "We don't want you bug-squashed when this thing comes down."

"Even if you are a pest." They were both against him.

He wandered off to their property line. It was awful to be little. Everybody ought to be born growed up, even Maudie, peachy as she was. On the ridge's other side, he could see down to the cabins in the next hollow. Suddenly a girl stepped from one of the cabins, opened a cellar in the bank, and came out with something in a tow sack. She glowed. Trembling, he hunched down quick and watched 'til she went back in the house. Oh, if he'd been a sparrow, he'd have flown right to her. He felt terrified — and unbelievably lucky.

"You got that wedge up there?" Roland yelled the way he did at his dog King. "This thing's fixing to bind."

When he ran back with the wedge, Leonard grabbed it, jammed it in the cut. A few more pulls and the tree cracked over. Leonard grinned at Roland.

"What's so interesting in Kilby Cove, Spence?" Roland had sweat on his upper lip. "Something that beats carrying brush?"

Spencer heard the sound a skirt made but knew it wasn't Goldie. A room would change when she entered, kindling the whole place.

He saw the grin, didn't answer, wiped his nose on the back of his hand.

"Them Kilbys aren't worth looking at," Roland began strongly with the crosscut, his jacket seeming too small for his shoulders. "Nothing but a passel of gypsies."

"Goldie ain't a gypsy." But he felt unsure.

"Is too. Goldie, Goldie," Leonard chanted. "Goldie's a gypsy, and her petticoat's dirty."

"It ain't either, Len." His whole face was hot now.

The work tore along with the chant, another log cut. Then, instead of measuring off a regular length, his brothers put the saw down less than two inches from the end.

"Going to make something for you, Spence." They were laughing. Bright little teeth bit, gnawed, ate up wood. A round the size of a small plate dropped off.

"This here's a Goldie cake," Roland picked it up as if he was serving, "and it's all yours. Don't you just love Goldie cakes? Here, take this, and we'll make you another."

"Goldie cake, Goldie cake." The saw was quick and keen. They cut two more. One got away, bouncing off wildly. He watched as the disks piled up, afraid he would cry. "I ain't going to carry brush, help you pull any wood, nor nothing." He threw the rope where they'd have to go get it and ran all the way down to the white rocks. He climbed the upper one,

His father and mother looked at each other, with expressions of wanting to hear more but not wanting to admit it.

sat with his butt getting cold 'til he heard them coming down the hill.

At supper, over his cornbread and milk, he spoke low to his mother.

"What's a gypsy?"

"A worthless rogue, that's what." His father had the best ears around, could hear rabbits in their burrows.

"Gypsies are people that travel about all the time." His mother stacked Leonard's bowl under hers. "They have no home. They're known to take things, then pick up and move on before you have a chance to miss anything. Did you feed that dog from under the table again, John?"

"You mean stealing?"

"Yes." She got up to clear. King hid from her behind the stove.

"Well, the Kilbys don't steal nothing, and they've been in Kilby Cove for always."

Leonard's shoulders were shaking, and he played at falling off his chair.

"What would you like for dessert, Spencer?" Roland's light eyes were sharp, hurting. "Some Goldie cake?" They hooted 'til their father had to say, "Boys."

"Did you think they was gypsies because they're so dark?" His father reached for a spill to light his pipe. "That's Indian blood, most likely. In which case, they may have been in Kilby Cove for always."

As they climbed up to bed, Leonard hissed in the darkness of the narrow stairway, "She may not be a gypsy — but her petticoat's still dirty."

He was at school before Goldie got there the next morning, waiting for the stamp of her heavy shoes, the swish of her dress. The smallest children were around the stove where Mr. Green had a fire going, but he sat at his own desk in readiness. Spencer heard the sound a skirt made but knew it wasn't Goldie. A room would change when she entered, kindling the whole place. Then someone said, loud enough for him to hear: "Goldie got a letter from Texas."

Texas was tan, "shaped like a frying pan," a long way off, like Japan. He had relatives in places like Ohio (green) and Indiana (yellow), but they wrote letters only when there'd been a new baby or a death. Who lived in Texas who would write to Goldie? Was somebody dead? He prepared himself to be sad and tender toward her.

"Texas it was, then?"

"How about that! When did it get here?"

"What does it say?"

"Yeah, I guess she wouldn't ..."

The letter must not be sad, the way they were talking, but Goldie wouldn't tell about it. None of them knew what it said. "After all this time ..." Roland and Leonard were going on about it too, leaving him out again.

Mr. Green was at his desk when the door banged open and Goldie burst into the room. Spencer turned. The others pretended to pay no attention. Goldie always came in like that. He watched her take her place.

How beautiful she was! She was old enough to have her skirts down, but she still wore her hair in a single stove-black plait that flipped at her waist when she walked. She was noisy as a storm, her thick soles pounding and her dress tail snapping. He loved the look, the sound. He eyed her more closely than usual, half expecting something strange, perhaps the mysterious letter pinned to her bodice in front, but Goldie looked the same. She tweaked his hair with her hard, brown fingers as she came by.

"Morning, Curly."

"Good morning, Goldie." *Darling.* Oh, there was a marvel about her, as if she'd still be there when the rocks of the earth melted away in final fire.

Mr. Green gaveled them into a new day.

He often wondered why Goldie still came to school, dreaded she might stop any time. At sixteen, Goldie was the oldest pupil and had been in the sixth grade for four years. Mr. Green had her help him with the primary class. He said she was sharp and would make a good teacher with more schooling. He gave her some of his books to read, ones with little print and pictures large as a page. Goldie read them while Mr. Green taught the middle children.

At recess, Spencer squatted on the ground, pulling his jacket around his knees against the wind. The other boys were running and playing to keep warm. Goldie was jumping rope with the girls, her braid cracking in the cold air. She jumped well despite her thick shoes, dust motes flying like sparks around her hem, but he noticed that what his brothers had said about her petticoat was true. Embarrassed, he turned away. When he looked back, another girl was jumping in her place, and Goldie was gone.

Was he looking for her? He wasn't sure, but when he went back in the schoolhouse, there she was, going up to Mr. Green's desk, quick and smooth as an otter, slipping the drawer open without a sound. As he watched, she picked up the teacher's little leather drawstring moneybag, took a dollar, drew the cords tight again. She looked up and saw him as she closed the drawer.

They stood, the room between them,

They knew all the time and never told him. They kept things from him.

each waiting on the other. Of a sudden, Goldie went to her knees on the floor, keening softly.

"Oh, Lordy, Spencer, please don't tell on me. I'm desperate." She swayed as if struck. "I don't know what to do. Please don't tattle on Goldie. I have to have more. Have to."

Then he was beside her, daring to pat the smooth black hair that seemed to burn his hand. Of course he would never tell.

"Goldie Kilby's got a letter from Texas," Leonard said.

His father and mother looked at each other, with expressions of wanting to hear more but not wanting to admit it.

"Well, we figured he went west." His mother scraped off the plates into the slops.

"Probably that's west enough." His father knocked out his pipe on the firedog. "I bet he never stopped running long enough to see if anybody was a-coming after him 'til he got clear to the desert."

"Who?" he tried to follow.

"Poor Cora Coulter." His mother wiped Maude's messy face and untied the towel from around her neck. "This'll just rake it all up again."

"Poor Goldie, I'd say. He ought to leave that child alone."

"Child, John?" His mother set Maude down from the high chair. "Poor little Goldie, as you call her, is near as old as I was when we were married. Finish your supper, Spencer."

"I don't want it."

That night, he stole a quarter out of Leonard's treasure box, made a slit in the back of his speller and jammed it in. The book both his brothers had carried to school before him was so worn the bulge didn't show. He couldn't let himself think what would happen when Leonard noticed the loss.

He waited his turn at the washpan next morning, almost afraid to look at himself. His eyes could have changed to be like Goldie's yesterday, all black pupil with the skin dark around them. Her eyes took up more space in her face than other people's did.

He couldn't see any further down than the bridge of his nose unless he stood on a stool, but he assured himself his eyes were still green under light, curly hair. He hated those curls, but Goldie seemed to like them.

He must see Goldie alone. Sometimes she stayed after school, but then Mr. Green would be there. Once he had had to go back for his tablet and at the door heard that deep, learned voice saying something about "all those calamities. Caused by a rash, hot-blooded young man — no, a boy, really."

Only Goldie and Mr. Green had been in the room, she sitting at one of the primary desks near the stove, a large book before her, while Mr. Green paced back and forth behind her.

"Does it show," the teacher had gestured to the empty seats, "that passion can be an excuse for anything?"

Goldie's lips moved without sound.

"Even the deaths of innocent bystanders, Lady Montague, Paris? You've read the play. What do you think of his saying 'heaven finds means to kill your joys with love?'"

She turned on him, her face awful, eyes hard as granite.

Goldie looked out the window.

"I don't know." She sounded sad. "People whisper. Sometimes I even hear them in my sleep."

The teacher's long pale hand fluttered above her as if about to light on her shoulder.

"She would have been my kin, my sister-in-law," Goldie said.

The hand fell without touching her.

He slipped the quarter to Goldie at recess. She looked at it without surprise, but she did thank him.

It was suddenly mild at noon, and he ate his lunch outside with Roland and Leonard. He had something to ask.

"You all know who Goldie's letter's from?"

"Yeah, guess we do." They salted their cold potatoes.

"Tell me."

They told him.

"He's a murderer!"

"Naw, Jack Coulter's not a criminal murderer. He had to kill a man, that's all. Happens sometimes." Roland knew.

"But he just walked up and shot him. That Norris didn't have a gun, you said."

"Now, I done told you. There was plenty of reason. The fellow ruined Jack's sister so she jumped in the millpond and drowned. Don't you understand nothing? She was pregnant, and he wouldn't marry her. She left a note naming Norris the father and saying the stuff he give her to get rid of it didn't work, that she was poisoned. Said he was trying to kill her, not help her, and she was in too much pain to bear.

"To get rid of it?" A baby? Like Maudie?

"Don't tell him stuff about babies." Leonard brushed off potato crumbs. "He's too little."

He started to tell them he already knew, but they went on.

"Norris had fair warning. Nothing could be proved, but the Coulters sent him word. 'You stay on your side of the mountain, and we won't come for you, but…" Roland leaned toward him, "we catch you on our side, then for the sake of our dear one, you're a dead man.' He couldn't go back on the family word, could he?"

Leonard raised an imaginary gun to his shoulder. "And when they come on Norris sitting there at the store, having crossed that line, smoking a cigar he's just bought, reared back with his feet on the rail like he owned the place, well, they sent Jack to their wagon for the gun. He was white and shaking, but he come back and hollered, 'Stand up, Norris, and take it like a man.' Near cut him in two with that old shotgun. Bang!" Leonard pulled his phantom triggers.

"The sheriff didn't even want to go after him." Roland tossed his potato skin. "He delayed and delayed. When he got there, Jack was a long time gone. All the way to Texas, apparently."

He felt sick. "But what's this Coulter doing writing Goldie?" He didn't want her having anything to do with somebody like that.

Roland and Leonard looked at each other. Oh, they enjoyed telling him.

"Oh, Spencer, you mean you didn't know either? Goldie was Jack Coulter's girl. They were fixing to get married before all this happened. Guess he's written he's coming to get her. But the sheriff'll

have to take him this time for sure. It'll be a long drop at the end of a short rope for Jack. Poor Goldie'll probably cry he was that crazy for her."

He left school to think. He knew Roland and Leonard would tell on him and he'd catch it, but he had to be by himself. He followed the creek down and sat on the bank, throwing winter-dried moss into the water.

Goldie.

They knew all the time and never told him. They kept things from him, like babies and Christmas secrets and how it felt to die to sin and be baptized. A murderer was coming back, and Goldie might have to see him again. But, ah, what would happen when Jack Coulter returned, that appealed to him. He could see himself with Goldie at the hanging. She might cry. He would hold her hand and, after it was all over, would take her home with him to calm her.

He slipped back to where he could see when the children were let out. He would follow Goldie night and day so he'd know if Coulter showed up. She started for home with the others but lagged behind, doubling back to head for Widower Henson's place. There'd be nobody there, Henson up at the store most of the winter and the cold part of spring. Goldie went in the house, came out again carrying something he couldn't see tucked up under her shawl. She headed for the barn.

"No, no, Goldie." He ran toward her. "Please don't take anything else. I'll help you." He would steal for her again.

When he entered the barn, Goldie was getting down a bridle. "No." He hadn't expected to speak first.

She turned on him, her face awful, eyes hard as granite. As she moved, she took from under her shawl something long and dark, held it in her fist. He couldn't think for a minute. Then he realized she had pulled a knife on him.

Goldie, who had begged him in tears not to give her away, was now like King at a kill — that knife in her hand, an ordinary kitchen butcher knife, but it made his innards hurt to look at it.

"Why Spence, you look like you'd seen somebody nine days drowned a-rising."

From a millpond?

Her face changed a little. It wasn't so awful, but still strange, not hers, like a face of clay. "What's the matter?" He leaned against the door frame and pointed to her hand.

"Oh, I didn't know it was you at first." She put the knife back under her arm and hid it with her shawl. He saw she had also taken a loaf of bread. "If it had been anybody else …" She drew her finger under her chin. "Anybody see you follow me here?"

He shook his head.

"You're kind of sweet on Goldie, ain't you, Curly?" She came nearer, trying to look friendly. "You won't tell on me this time either, will you? 'Member, I'm desperate. Got to have the mule."

"What are you going to do with him?"

"Ride him over the mountain to meet someone."

"Ride …? You taking him because Jack Coulter's coming?"

"Jack? He's not … What do you know about him?"

He told her some of what Roland had said. Her face settled harder. "Sit here." She jabbed at a pile of hay. "Don't move."

She saddled and bridled the mule. The animal stomped, but Goldie did the work fast, harsh. When finished, she looped the reins around a post and came over to him.

"Now, little boy, you're going to make me a bounden promise never to tell none of this." She was up close, and he could see the knife's handle in her armpit. "Oh, Lordy, I've got to trust you. Now, when Goldie's gone, you stay here awhile, then when nobody's around, scat on home."

"All right, Goldie, I promise," he was whispering now. She untied the reins.

"'When you're gone …?' Is Jack Coulter coming? Are you feared? You running away from him? No need for that. The sheriff'll get him, and I'll look after you."

"Feared?" Goldie laughed. Her white teeth flashed. "You simple-headed thing. Such a baby. It's Jack I'm going to. I'm his woman, sealed-like. I'm meeting the man he's sent to fetch me, like he said he would." She was still laughing as she jumped into the saddle. "My waiting's done, thank God. Now, get out there, idiot, and look if there's anybody'll see me."

He did as bid, nodding to her as a signal. As she yanked and guided the mule through the door, he caught at her shoe.

"You going all the way to Texas, Goldie? Will you come back?" Her shoe smelled of stalled animals, piss, and fury, but he hung on as she tried to jerk free.

"Leave off. Come back here? Not when I've got my man. I'll never be back to this place," she spat. "What do you know? Let me go or I'll …" She snapped her teeth at him.

He turned loose and clasped his hands. "Goldie, please."

She kicked the mule and lashed it with the ends of the reins. The animal went down the bank and into the gully, spurning and scattering the stones. He listened as the clatter and hoofbeats died away, all sound soon gone except for a nearby bird.

Something, he felt, had nearly happened. He sat on the hay next to the door 'til almost dusk, his head down, listening. "In my whole life," he thought, "I will never be able to change anything." He was shivering from more than the growing cold.

"Goldie?"

After a little while longer, he wiped his nose and went home. N&T

Honorable Mentions

"Picasso's Cat"
Belinda Anderson
Asbury, West Virginia

"The Bicycle"
Ed Davis
Yellow Springs, Ohio

"Driving Cynthia"
George M. Lies
Morgantown, West Virginia

"Slow Motion"
Lou Martin
Louisville, Kentucky

"Fences"
James Alan Riley
Pikeville, Kentucky

Mark Givens
The Last Full-Time Farmer in Clover Hollow

by Fred Carlisle

This profile is one of a series I have been writing about the people and places of Newport, Va., and nearby Clover Hollow, a village and valley where I live in the Allegheny Mountains. In 1992, Barbara Carlisle and I moved to the Hollow. We were strangers, with neither a family nor a history to bring us here or connect us to the mountains. As academic and artistic migrants, we have always left our pasts behind. But now, we are trying to find a home and join a community. That is the point of my essays and profiles: trying to understand and trying to fit in.

—Fred Carlisle

"I had it made until he died. I haven't had it made since." This is Mark Givens speaking, talking about his father, Daniel, who died on August 13, 1982. He was 60 years old. His son was 30.

At the time, Mark Givens was a salesman selling fertilizer in Southwest Virginia for the Boca Raton, Fla.-based specialty chemical company W.R. Grace & Co. "I loved every minute of it," he remembers. "I was saving money. I enjoyed the job. I loved dealing with the people." He felt free and independent—he followed his own travel schedule. He felt responsible and successful.

Everything was going well: the job, living in Southwest Virginia's Clover Hollow, and a new marriage. Mark and Melodie had been married for three weeks and were about to move into a new mobile home just above his family's house.

Then Daniel died. He had been helping install the trailer, fell ill, and two days later died from a stroke. Mark and Melodie never did live in that trailer.

Courtesy of Mark Givens

A young Mark Givens plays with his first-born, Daniel.

A New Life

With that death, one part of Givens' life ended, another started. He became the farmer he hadn't planned on being—at least not so soon, not quite in this way. As a boy, he had helped his father with the farmwork, putting up hay and keeping fields clear. He remembers the hard work of cutting cedars by hand on steep, rocky hillsides. But his father did not make him do much heavy work or assign him regular chores. Dan seemed to have a different—and better—life in mind for his son.

Before his father died, Givens had not thought much about the farm. "I didn't really know what would happen here. I knew I would end up with the place since I was an only child." He also knew he didn't want to move away. "I think it's the greatest place I've ever been in my life," he says.

But living on the family farm—because of its beauty, family tradition, and a sense of place and home—while employed elsewhere differs dramatically from living on the farm and working it. It is still not altogether clear to Givens why he did take over after his father's sudden death. "It doesn't really sort out. It was a bad time, a real bad time. Everything was

Courtesy of Mark Givens

Mary and Daniel Givens were full-time farmers until Dan's fatal stroke in 1982. He was 60 years old and his son, Mark, was 30.

in such a blur. You look back on it as kind of wandering around in the dark."

His mother, Mary Givens, agrees. As she sees it, the decision to take up farming was "thrust" on her son and daughter-in-law. Although Mary would have preferred that her son had kept his sales job, she didn't make an issue of it at the time. Now she wishes in a way she had. Had her son stayed with W.R. Grace, things "would have gone down here, and I wouldn't have felt good about it," she acknowledges. Still she wanted a better life for Mark and Melodie than the difficult, demanding, insecure life she had shared with her husband.

Givens' close relationship with his father goes a long way in explaining why he decided to abandon his sales job. He loved and admired his daddy; he couldn't get enough of being with his father and "learning stuff." Says Givens, "If he had been hauling hay this morning, you'd have to beat me out of the truck to keep me from being there."

Another factor influencing his decision is that in some instinctive way, Givens likes farming. He likes "messin'" with the equipment. Nothing satisfies him more than putting up a thousand bales of hay in a day — "if all the help shows up and the equipment doesn't break," he notes dryly. So in one sense, the answer is simple: "I guess I had a desire to farm."

He also, he says, "didn't want to see what was going on here stop." As an only child, he felt he didn't have much choice: He could either take over and do his best to keep things going, or he could stay with Grace, farm less, and watch the place deteriorate. Selling the farm and living elsewhere or leasing the land and continuing to live in the family house never entered the picture. Givens felt responsible for the farm and for the homeplace. "When you're where your great-grandparents were, you feel some responsibility to keep it looking half decent."

Family History

Floyd Harvey Givens, Mark's great-grandfather, was the third of three brothers to move from nearby Craig County into Giles County's Clover Hollow. Floyd's father, James Stafford Givens, first acquired property there in 1860, although James himself did not ever live in the Hollow, remaining instead on his Craig County holdings. Floyd moved to Giles County in 1916, at which time he acquired the farm and built the house in which Mark, Melodie, their children Daniel and Kelly, and Mary Givens now live.

Mary Payne and Dan Givens were married in 1944. Conditions at the farm were "awful," Mary remembers. Givens' father had died in 1941 at age 47 when Dan was just 19. Shortly afterwards virtually everything but the house, land, and one tractor was sold at auction to pay debts.

So Dan and Mary started from scratch. They made no money at all for years. A skilled farmer and enough of a mechanic to keep his equipment in good repair at little cost, Dan Givens logged and sold coal to supplement their income. Things improved gradually; the net worth of their land and their equipment increased. Still, life was hard and marginal, just as it was for their friends and neighbors. Having lived on the farm for more than 50 years, Mary Givens does not remember any point when they finally had it made. The farm never made much profit nor provided much disposable income.

That's still the case. When Mark Givens took over, the land was debt-free. He has invested still more over the years. Nevertheless, he feels no better off, no more secure than his mother and father were. He makes a marginal living under very difficult circumstances.

Making Ends Meet

Several years ago, a cousin by the name of F.B. Givens described Mark Givens' rocky, hilly farm as the "hardest" in all of Giles County. F.B. probably exaggerated — much of Giles County is like this — but he had a point. "There's not as much level land to farm the way you'd want to," Givens admits. He owns roughly 600 acres, 150 of which is mountainside and forest. Only a small part of the rest, some bottomland along Clover Hollow Branch, is even close to flat.

Givens raises cattle and sheep and grows and sells hay. It's about all you can do with this land and the only way to make any money at all. The days of the diverse, relatively self-sufficient, middle-sized farm in the mountains — doing dairy, keeping a few hogs and chickens for meat and eggs, raising grain for flour, growing and canning vegetables — passed some time ago.

In addition to what he owns, Givens leases land in three counties — Giles, Craig, and Montgomery — from half a dozen different people, most of them relatives or neighbors. Some tracts border the Clover Hollow farm, but several lie 10 to 15

Courtesy of Mark Givens

Mark and Melodie Givens were married only three weeks when Mark's father died and the farming life was thrust upon them.

miles away. Farming may be a "bad habit" that spurs you to farm more and more land just for the sake of getting bigger. But the current economics of farming give him little choice.

Even with all this land to farm, he has to supplement his income by mowing along roadsides in the summer and clearing snow in the winter for the state and by driving a schoolbus for Giles County. To accomplish all this, Givens employs one day laborer for the farm, hires drivers for mowing and for pushing snow, owns six tractors, two trucks, three balers, bush hogs, cutter bars, and four automobiles (all old, he assures me).

Fred Carlisle

The chance to work with machinery accounts in large measure for Given's fondness for farming. Making a truck work from scavenged parts is economical and satisfying. Unloading hay bales from the truck and efficiently stacking them in the barn using a huge John Deere tractor takes a lot of skill and is what Givens loves.

A Good Day in the Field

Certain about having loved sales, Givens claims to love farming as well — sometimes, anyway. "Some days, you like it more. Some days, you like it a lot less," Givens says.

A good day is a day spent getting up a pile of hay dry. I rode with him for the better part of a day while he was loading, hauling, and unloading large round bales of hay. I sensed the pleasure, the skill, and the rhythm with which he moved through the gears, controlled the tractors, and placed the hay bales in the barn. Stacking bales in a barn is tedious work in one sense — but familiar and satisfying for him nonetheless. Besides, as he notes, "hay is something you sell and have some control over the selling price. Anything you do on a farm where you have some control over the selling price, that's what you need to be doing more of."

Headed for Sinking Creek Valley in Craig County, he drove a large flatbed International diesel which had, in fact, been pieced together from several other trucks. This is one of the economies — and satisfactions — of farming: solving a mechanical problem as cheaply as possible. Once he reached the valley, he was to pick up the last 11 bales of hay from an 18-acre bottomland field.

He turned off Route 42 onto a gravel road which paralleled the creek, crossed two narrow bridges, passed three old farmhouses, twisted around a barn, and drove into the large open field. His hired hand was loading bales onto another truck. After the hired hand had finished and driven away, Givens climbed on the tractor, loaded more bales onto the flatbed — shaking the truck each time he dropped one — left the tractor there to pick up later, and then drove the truck back to Clover Hollow, where he unloaded and carefully stacked the bales in a barn he leases. This time, Givens was driving his huge John Deere 4055, the one he used to break through our access road one winter after a three-foot snowfall. Between the large bale clamped on the front and the height of the tractor cab, it took real skill to drive through the barn door and stack the bales efficiently. That's what he loves.

He feels no better off, no more secure than his mother and father were. He makes a marginal living under very difficult circumstances.

The Bad Days

And then there are the bad days. Mark came home one day and found that his hired hand had turned over a truck in the branch that runs alongside the house. "You work three days on something that was totally human error," he recalls ruefully. Or someone calls to tell him his cattle are out and wandering along a road or tramping through a cornfield, eating as they go.

And then there's always the weather. "Weather is a factor just about 75 percent of the days I get up." During hay baling and calving times, it is critical. Hay can best be cut, cured, raked, and baled while dry. A little light rain between mowing and baling doesn't hurt as long as the hay dries out, but a heavy rain could effectively ruin it. Hay will also rot if it lies on the ground wet for many days. A farmer must read the weather well.

Around here, calves typically start coming in late February when the mothers drop them in the fields. Therefore, unusually cold temperatures and deep snow can endanger the survival of newly born calves. If the weather turns especially bad, Mark — or sometimes Melodie — has to go into the field, load the animal onto a truck or into the backseat of their old Chevy, and move it to shelter. If 50 to 100 cows give birth over several weeks, imagine the hours, the labor, the exhaustion. "Sometimes," Givens says, "I think I don't want to deal with this weather thing the rest of my life."

There are the personal conflicts that destroy relationships and distress communities. Four or five years ago, on the recommendation of an extension agent who also happened to be a neighbor, Givens bought 100 head of sheep, some of whom turned out to have foot rot, which then spread through his herd. The dealer had claimed the animals were not diseased.

That was one of the worst ordeals, "a nightmare," he says. Givens recalls the summer with embarrassment, pain, and anger. He felt — still feels — tricked and foolish. The repercussions — how the problem was handled, who said what to whom, who believes what — have caused conflict and bitterness among neighbors and friends, tensions with relatives, and deep hurt for Mark, Melodie, and Mary Givens.

Fred Carlisle

The view off the porch at the Givens' home shows the farm's rolling hills with Johns Creek Mountain in the background. The farm has been in the family since 1916.

Jokes and Zantac

"This kind of place eats people," Givens observes. The work is stressful, tiring, and relentless. Givens tries to "get smarter" about farming, but he really doesn't farm very differently than his father did. And it may no longer be a question of "smarter." Givens may have reached a limit. External conditions — costs, prices, interest rates, knowledge, and state support for farmers — and internal capacity — time, energy, strength, equipment, land, hired help — probably make further improvements or greater profit virtually impossible.

He knows this and occasionally jokes about it. "You work hard and make nothing. Sometimes, if you do nothing and make nothing, then you're a whole lot better off." Other times, Givens talks about the strain — what it is that eats him and that consumed his father. "There's a lot of strain to it if you take it serious." Dan Givens suffered from an ulcer, and his son is predisposed to stomach trouble. But helpful as they might be from moment to moment, jokes and Zantac do not change circumstances.

Church offers Givens momentary relief and peace. "I try to find time for church. One way or another, that'll make you look at things different, let you think about something else for an hour or two." As sustaining as that might be, the wearing, relentless, confining, sometimes satisfying and oftentimes discouraging life continues. "Yeah, I work a little too hard, a little too long," says Givens. But he sees no way out.

Farming is so demanding and economically marginal that Givens tends to see any restriction, barrier, or inconvenience as threatening his livelihood and the well-being of his family. This partly explains his opinions and anxieties about property rights which he talks about frequently and passionately.

Listen to him one way, and he seems narrow. He opposes the 765-kilovolt power line route proposed by the Columbus, Ohio-based American Electric Power that could cross Clover Hollow. But even though the U.S. Forest Service also opposes the Clover Hollow route for the power line, Givens doesn't entirely welcome their support since he objects to the U.S. Forest Service's "control" over private property and corporations. "It just scares the hell out of me to see how much control the Forest Service and the Appalachian Trail have over business and industry." He fears, if the truth be told, that liberal environmentalists want to redistribute wealth. Someday he imagines the Appalachian Trail or the National Park Service will seize a piece of his or his neighbor's land for trails or parking. "You need to be able to do with your land what you want to up to a point," he asserts. "I'm not opposed to zoning. We need some protection, but a bunch of do-gooders don't need to come in and tell you what you're going to do after that."

Listen to Givens in another way, and he is protecting his livelihood and preserving his way of life. Farming demands virtually all of his time and energy. He runs 12 to 14 hours a day. He cannot leave the farm, or if he does, his wife cannot. So he fights anything which might make farming still more difficult and marginal. He frets about what might follow reasonable restrictions and regulations. What *next?* He cannot help but feel threatened.

Fred Carlisle

Mark and his son, Daniel, discuss farm business. Daniel may not continue in his father's footsteps as a full-time farmer, but Mark hopes the farm will remain intact and well-kept.

At some point, he takes his stand, like so many in these mountains, on principle as well as practicality. They are defending land, family, tradition, community, and independence against a history of prejudice and the most destructive features of modernization. In some real sense, Givens and others are re-

sisting further colonization by government and corporations.

He looked at me one day as I was leaving his house. He had been talking property rights, and I had been explaining how much he and most environmentalists had in common. He seemed skeptical. He thought it over, then said, "You *should* care about these things. *You* should want to preserve what you came here for." And I realized, one more time, what Barbara and I share with Givens and many of our Clover Hollow neighbors.

We seek solitude and independence here. We bought property to protect and control our way of life. We would like to become part of this community. We actively fight the power line. We care about property values, and yes, in the end about property rights.

Carrying On

He is truly ambivalent about his way of life — feels caught, trapped. "In a way, I don't see why anybody wants to do this to themselves: work all these hours and never be able to plan to be done, to fight the weather. It's a dumb existence." He says this matter-of-factly, without apparent regret or anger. Givens' farm income is obviously limited. He has no retirement fund, no life insurance. His assets — land, equipment, buildings, a home — will have to provide. It is a high risk way of life — both economically and psychically. He worries about his family and the future. "Daddy died young," he says quietly. "I wonder if that'll happen to me."

He possesses few words for beauty, attachment, home, and family, but he feels wonder, excitement, love, and devotion very strongly.

Nevertheless, Givens wouldn't want to live anywhere else — and maybe not do anything else. He prizes his independence. He likes the land. He loves equipment. He values his family history and farming tradition. He cannot imagine living away from the mountains. They and the farm are his place — his dwelling and center — and not merely a pretty backdrop for his farming life.

He speaks simply about the beauty of the mountains. "When you come up Route 460 from Appomattox and see the first mountain, that's a good sight." He possesses few words for beauty, attachment, home, and family, but he feels wonder, excitement, love, and devotion very strongly.

Now in his mid-40s, one of the "younger" generation, Givens is the only full-time farmer in Clover Hollow, and he may be the last. He hopes he will be farming for years, yet he vaguely contemplates alternatives. He worries about the farm and prays it will somehow remain intact and well-kept. "I hope the kids will take enough interest to keep the place looking nice."

But there are no apparent successors to Givens — certainly not his own son Daniel. "It's not born in Daniel," his grandmother Mary Givens says. "He's a good worker but not a farmer." It's hard to imagine any children or kin of other families or any newcomers relying primarily on farming for a livelihood. This may be the end. The costs are simply too great. N&T

Fred Carlisle is the William E. Lavery professor in the department of English at Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Va.

Lurany Oliver
(1795-1888; the first white woman in Cades Cove)

I love silence, so scarce
these days when tourists pour
from cars and buses, shouting
and chattering, stomp through the house,
carve initials in logs. But
in the early days, I yearned
for talk and laughter, nobody
about but John and the babies.
We nigh starved that first winter,
our only neighbors a few Indians,
who might have massacred us
in our beds, but instead, felt pity,
gave us pumpkins to see us through.

I come at sundown, the hushed
hour, wander the woods, drink
from the spring, sit on the porch
listening. If I listen hard,
I hear John whistling, children
playing, the kettle bubbling.
If I listen harder still, I hear
wolves howling, Indians whooping,
neighbors bickering over war,
an owl calling names of the dead.

— Elizabeth Howard

Elizabeth Howard has had poems in several journals, including Nebo, Piedmont Literary Review, Potato Eyes, Old Red Kimono, *and* Visions International. *In addition, she has published fiction in* Xavier Review, Appalachian Heritage, *and* The Licking River Review. *She has a book of poems,* Anemones, *published by Grandmother Earth Creations, 1998.*

Rumors

by SG Séguret

Back-to-the-wilderness pioneers create a life in the North Carolina mountains under the watchful eyes of their slightly perplexed neighbors.

"Did you really live in a cave?"

I was a bit taken aback by the question posed to me by one of my high school classmates. "I heard it said that when you folks first moved down here from up North, you lived in a cave 'til you got your house built." I knew that a lot of rumors had circulated about us, but this was the first time I had heard that one.

My parents, Peter and Polly Gott, were the first outsiders to move into the hidden North Carolina valley of Shelton Laurel since the turn of the century when a couple of Presbyterian missionaries had come in and built a church and a school and a hospital, all long since in ruins. When my parents arrived from Pennsylvania, there was no paved road running through the valley, only a dirt wagon track that wound beside the small river, leading in one direction to Johnson City, Tennessee, and in the other to Greeneville, Tennessee. They had found a little loop of North Carolina, seldom crossed because of the formidable mountain roads.

If you approach by car from the flatness of Tennessee, you are unprepared for the mountains that rise up out of the blue. And they are blue, too—the Blue Ridge, always enveloped in a haze of mist, which is humidity evaporating from their lush greenness. One moment, you are looking at them in awe, and the next moment you are swallowed up by them, taken into their arms as a mother gathers a baby to her breast. And it is a similar sensation. You feel protected, nourished, suddenly a child again, and you know that all you need for life is right here, hidden in these oldest of hills.

So it was that my parents stumbled across their home-to-be after two months of camping out in farmers' fields in the surrounding area, looking for just the right spot. They had been married shortly before and had set off in their little VW bug with their sleeping bags and Daddy's banjo in search of the highest mountains and the most music. They had heard that North Carolina was a good place for the music and had looked on the map to pinpoint the mountains. Following their nose and their ears, they ended up 50 miles north of Asheville, North Carolina. There they lingered for a while with an old fiddler whose even older father offered to give them 20 acres of land if they would settle there. It was tempting, but not quite right.

Then they discovered Shelton Laurel. A secluded green valley, flanked on all sides by mountains rising gently up to 5,000 feet, it was the dream they hadn't known they had. They found an abandoned farm which they offered to rent while they searched out their own piece of land. The 90-year-old lady who owned the farm never would take a cent from them, although they lived there two years. And she gave them fresh milk from her cow and vegetables from her garden and taught them the essentials of mountain living.

They were considered by all—locals and their own Northern parents alike—a little off in the head because they were edu-

Courtesy of SG Séguret

Several years after settling in Western North Carolina, Polly and Peter Gott performed at the May 1968 Smoky Mountain Folk Festival in Gatlinburg, Tenn.

cated people looking to live like the old-timers of the mountains: They wanted to build a log house, hewn on two sides in the traditional style. They wanted to split shingles, raise all their food, and keep a cow, pig, chickens, and other basic farm animals. They wanted to plow with a mule (the stubbornnest of

Marshall (N.C.) News Record

Peter Gott stands in front of the log house, hewn on two sides in the traditional style, that he and Polly built. The photo, taken in 1980, was for an article in the *Marshall (N.C.) News Record* entitled "The Right Place: Pennsylvania Couple Finds Privacy, Happiness and Music."

creatures, to be avoided if at all possible), carry their water, heat with a chimney, light with kerosene lamps that would need trimming every day, and — ultimate symbol of being behind the times — they wanted an outdoor privy.

You must know that this was in 1960, before the back-to-the-land movement began. If Peter and Polly Gott weren't pioneers in the wilderness, they were pioneers in the return-to-the-wilderness, but they didn't have an inkling of that then. They weren't trying to prove anything. They only had a vision of how they wanted to live, and they set out to find it.

Not everyone was as immediately welcoming as the landlady. Strangers never did no good — especially them Northe'ners. In a place where nothing much happened out of the ordinary and change was so slow you didn't notice it, the Civil War was still alive in most people's memories. Many Western Carolinians had sided with the North, figuring if they didn't have slaves, by God, nobody else oughta have 'em either. They were quite certain they didn't need nobody from the outside comin' in and tellin' 'em what to do.

Lucky for Daddy he brought his five-string along. Everybody, even the most taciturn, loved music. And they'd all ask him, after a while, if'n he could play that thang. Just a verse of "Old Joe Clark" would bring smiles to faces, and some of the neighbors would kick up their heels and do a step or two. Some would say, "Here, give me that banjer, son, and let me show you how my Granddaddy done it." There were those, like old man Uncle George Landers, who hadn't touched an instrument in years and who'd get all excited and remember tune after tune. At night, after the chores were done, Daddy would try to remember what he had heard, and the next time he saw a neighbor, he could play it back note for note.

Soon he was calling square dances in another rented shack and finding local people to play for them. Nobody had thought about calling dances in years because there was always so much trouble

They were considered by all — locals and their own Northern parents alike — a little off in the head.

afterwards. Shelton Laurel was in a dry county so there was a lot of illegal whiskey made by the light of the moon. Moonshine: kill ye or cure ye. That, combined with Scotch-Irish tempers, was a volatile invitation to "have it out." But young Pete was just naive enough — or ignorant enough, whichever way you want to put it — that he didn't think twice about giving the dances another try. And people came. *Swing your partner, do-si-do, promenade 'round with a heel 'n' toe.* Boy, that young man could pick a banjer, and he could call them squar' dances, too.

So by and large, the young couple was adopted. There were many who came to help them out and show them things about canning, basketmaking, harvesting, tanning groundhog hides. And there were those, too, who drove up and stood by, whistling with their hands in their pockets, looking on to see how them crazy young'uns was a-makin' it.

My mother's passion is for painting. Whenever she wasn't standing over the hot wood cookstove canning vegetables or washing clothes in big tin washtubs over a barrel fire outside, you could find her out in the fields with her sketchbook

Marshall (N.C.) News Record

Polly Gott, whose passion is painting, would roam the countryside sketching. Her reluctance to let anyone see her work in her early days was the source of an outlandish rumor.

and watercolors. Being young and pretty — and not being crazy about anyone's seeing her work (these were her early days) — she would fold up her paper and head the other way whenever she saw anyone coming. Thus came yet another rumor: the one

that she was making secret maps of the area. The family name being Gott, unheard of in this land of Sheltons and Franklins and Hensleys, the rumor was soon embroidered. My parents were *Russian* spies making maps of the area! (Russian?! Why not?)

Later, after we had moved into the log house my parents had built on 40 acres of steep, wooded land that they bought for $42 an acre, word began to circulate up North about a homesteading couple who were doing everything by hand and living on $200 a year: $3 for kerosene to fill their oil lamps, $10 for seeds to plant their garden, $8 for coffee, and $8 for toilet paper (they had tried cornshucks and newspapers and even mullein leaves for a commendable amount of time but finally gave in to that one luxury). Then, with what was left over, they paid local taxes and purchased gasoline.

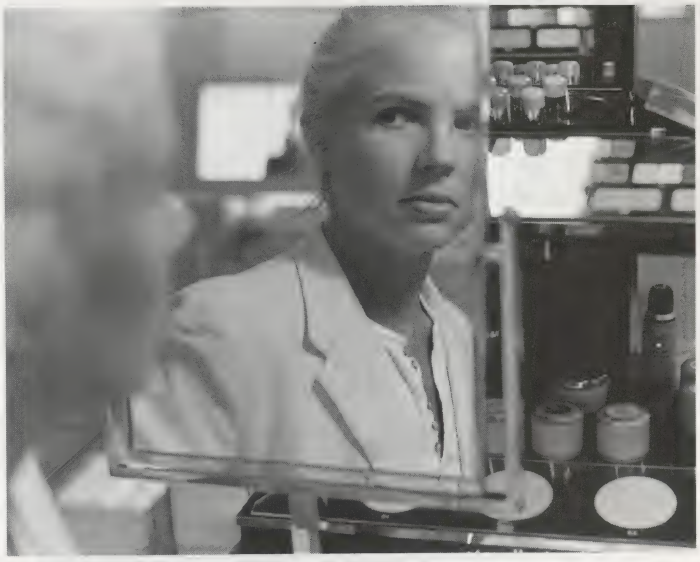
They weren't trying to prove anything. They only had a vision of how they wanted to live, and they set out to find it.

We started having visitors. Of course, we had no telephone to warn us of their arrival. They would just appear — and stay. The back-to-the-earth movement had begun, and young hippie couples were looking for role models. I don't know how the word got around so well, but I remember people spread out in sleeping bags all over our living room floor — and sometimes even lining the floor of our henhouse. My mother spent long hours over the hot stove when I knew she wanted to be out painting or working with her clay (she had made the middle story of our cow barn into a potter's studio). It was lucky Mother and Daddy had planted a big garden — and dug a deep outhouse.

Fran Belin

The Gott homestead (c. 1970) had a cow barn with a second story potter's studio, and a henhouse, which often became a sleeping area for visitors looking to the Gotts as back-to-the-land role models.

We had an outdoor shower, which was a watering can hanging from a pole with a string attached from the spout. Everyone was eager to try it. One of our neighbors, happening to drop in for a visit before suppertime just as the shower hour approached, caught sight of some of our guests wandering around naked with the watering can. So the word began to circulate that we were running a nudist colony up there on the mountain.



Hahvay Wang

From homesteading to modelling to working as a professional musician, author SG Séguret continues to lead a varied existence.

When Daddy had a new road bulldozed into the house — one that could be navigated in winter — he sowed grass seed on it to keep rains from washing it out. To keep people from driving on the road until the grass had taken hold, he built a heavy wooden gate out of walnut poles and padlocked it shut for the time being. So rumor had it that we were growing marijuana and had built the gate to keep revenuers out.

Subsequently, we had a visit from the revenuers. They said they were out looking for stills and wanted to know where our "grass patch" was. Daddy had a hard time convincing them that all we grew were vegetables.

Finally, turning to go but still looking skeptical, one of them happened to spot a plant Mother had allowed to grow outside the kitchen window because she thought it was pretty. By golly, if it wasn't a plant of marijuana! One of our unannounced visitors must have let a grain fall there, and Mom, in her innocence, thought it was a flower. It took more time to convince the revenuers that this was not sown on purpose. Turning to go for the last time, one of them looked back around and said in a conspiratorial whisper to Daddy, "You haven't got any seed a man could have, have you?"

But no, we never lived in a cave. N&T

SG Séguret, known to most as Susi Gott, is a fiddler and adjunct professor of bluegrass at East Tennessee State University in Johnson City, Tenn., and the mother of two children. A native of North Carolina, she lived for 10 years on the outskirts of Paris. "Rumors" is one of a series of essays about her mountain upbringing. Author of "Sundays," an essay which appeared in Now & Then*'s spring 1987 issue, Séguret has also been published in* The Pendulum, Le Cri du Coyote, *and* Women in Bluegrass.

Incoming Fire

Cyril Carver Dreams His Life

London, 1918

At two his name disappeared
in an orphan file in London. For a while
he had thought he remembered
her lullaby, a murmur between the rolls
of thunder, her soft hands touching.
The curtain, where she leaned out
calling to his dead father, was on fire.
"Such flames!" the agency woman said.
"Maybe they oughta took you wi' 'em,
little loner, little no-name child."

Penrhiwceiber, Wales, 1919

The young Welshman thanked the stars,
the confederation of bureaucracies,
the postwar pinch, his wife's sad eyes,
whatever it was that sent him one last time
across the golden mouth of Severn,
to find an orphaned child, this gift
to fill their lives. Now he was theirs
to hold, to teach a tongue, to name. *"Cyrus,"*
he suggested, "from fire, my little sun." "No,"
she smiled, *"Cyril,* little prince, the lordly one."

Ellis Island, 1921

"It was for me, my future, they gave up Wales
and found a way to the Promised Land,
believing everything good they had heard
from those who came to tell of the lady
with the bold, bright lamp in her hand."
First the Alleghenies, then further south,
like canaries schooled only for collieries,
they found the Blue Ridge and a lode
so black it glistened in the seam, so clean
it burned white above a bluebird flame.

Tattle Creek Farm, Virginia—and London, 1942

He wrote to his young wife on the river farm:
"Just when we thought it was all coming together,
I up and flew away—haha—like the bird
that escaped your mama's Sunday dinner. Guess
they wanted me to see one more fire in London."
He enclosed a squinting snapshot, smiling,
aimed at disarming her thousandth fear.
Come dawn, armed in the heavier mail
of a B-17, he addressed the hail of black flak
and the lightning script of the Messerschmitts.

Emory, Virginia, 1945

The nightmare fire at long last out,
he picked up the life he had thought
he'd never know with Lillian and his son,
went to school on the GI Bill, studied history—
"the only prophecy," he told his mates.
Reading the *Iliad,* he shuddered
at the loss of Hector's son,
swore he would never see his boy
given over to fate, hurled to placate
the whims of jealous men and gods.

Old Glade School, Virginia, 1953

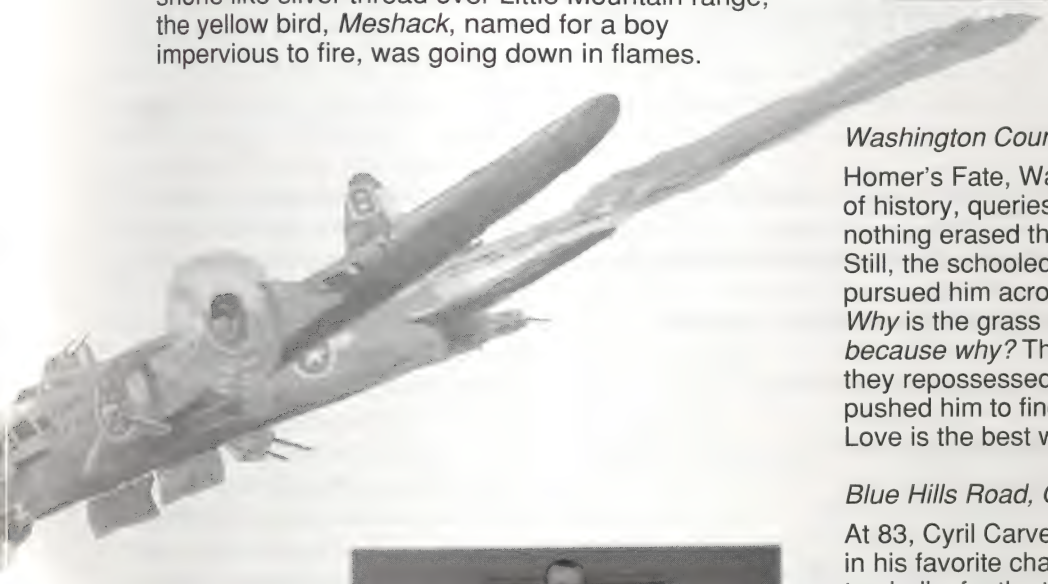
Watching his Ken learn became his call to teach.
Old Glade, clustered in a mountain valley,
became his schoolroom, consumed his love
of local lore. His pupils brimmed with stories
gathered from the granpas and grammas:
how they came west, built the chestnut barns,
subdued the bears, assuaged the ghosts, built
the roads and churches. At night he read *Walden*
to his son. And Lillian, turning out the lights,
watched their ritual nights turn into years.

Seven Springs, Virginia, 1964

As in the stories, time passed. Ken
went to flying school, and he passed, too,
"with *flying* colors," his daddy liked to jest.
Up on Seven, aged and alone, Old Wanda
stirred, rose from sleeping in her chair to glaze
the small dark figures she had fired. Some said
it was witchery, others said prophecy, revelation—
When she raked her children from the kiln, the blast,
like a holy wind, took her breath away. She uttered
a wry scripture: *From ashes, give them beauty.*

Little Mountain, Virginia, 1965

Now it was spring. This time Wanda roused
to the whine and sputter of a yellow plane.
That teacher's boy dipping his wings to Glade
and his proud daddy—the first of our lads to fly!
He'd be in the new book about the county,
along with the piece about her own clay boys... Then
she saw the frozen flash. Where the high wires
shone like silver thread over Little Mountain range,
the yellow bird, *Meshack*, named for a boy
impervious to fire, was going down in flames.



Washington County, Virginia, 1976

Homer's Fate, Wanda's divinations, the props
of history, queries raised to a graveyard sky—
nothing erased the slate of its indelible *why.*
Still, the schooled eyes of children
pursued him across the years with other *whys:*
Why is the grass green? *Why* am I? *Why,*
because why? They did not seal his loss;
they repossessed his time, healed his heart,
pushed him to find again what he had known:
Love is the best we can ever do.

Blue Hills Road, Glade Spring, Virginia, 1999

At 83, Cyril Carver hunkers down
in his favorite chair, sheds the parachute
too bulky for the turret, eases into plexiglass,
fetal, transparent. His vaporous breath
becomes a prayer for grit and grace
to face incoming fire. Then, for an instant
there appears in the peripheral air
a tiny biplane, dipping its fragile yellow wings.
Cyril grins, lifts a gloved "thumbs up,"
and waits for whatever the night sky brings.

—Dan Leidig

A retired literature teacher, Dan Leidig lives in Emory, Va. Writing about this poem, Leidig says, "The story is of an orphan lad, adopted by Welsh miner parents, brought to the Virginia coalfields, returned to London as a ball-turret gunner, then hit by the tragic loss of his pilot son, finally recovering in the classroom, becoming a master teacher."

Previous page: Cyril at age three taken in Wales after his adoption, c. 1919; Cyril as a member of the 8th Air Force, London, 1942 (both courtesy of Cyril and Lillian Carver). This page: Ken Carver boarding his biplane Meshack, 1964 (courtesy of Lillian and Cyril Carver); Lillian Carver, Dan Leidig, and Cyril Carver on the front porch of the Carvers' home in Glade Spring, Va., into which they moved on their wedding day. Dan Leidig was a classmate of Cyril's and remains a lifelong friend (1999, Stan Williams). The B-17 bomber is from "B-17 May Day, May Day" by Bill Reames.

Against the Odds

Min Matheson and the ILGWU

by Kenneth C. Wolensky
and
Robert P. Wolensky

One day in 1944, Minnie Lurye Matheson, a young wife and mother of two small daughters, picked up the phone in her Sayre, Pa., home, and there on the line was International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) president David Dubinsky. He was upset, she remembered, ranting in his usual combination of Yiddish and English. More and more garment factories were "running away" from Manhattan's garment district to Pennsylvania's anthracite region in search of cheaper labor, he railed, and the ILGWU had to do something about it.

A vibrant union and a community on the mend were the gifts given by a feisty Chicago-born woman to Northeastern Pennsylvania.

Out of Early Retirement

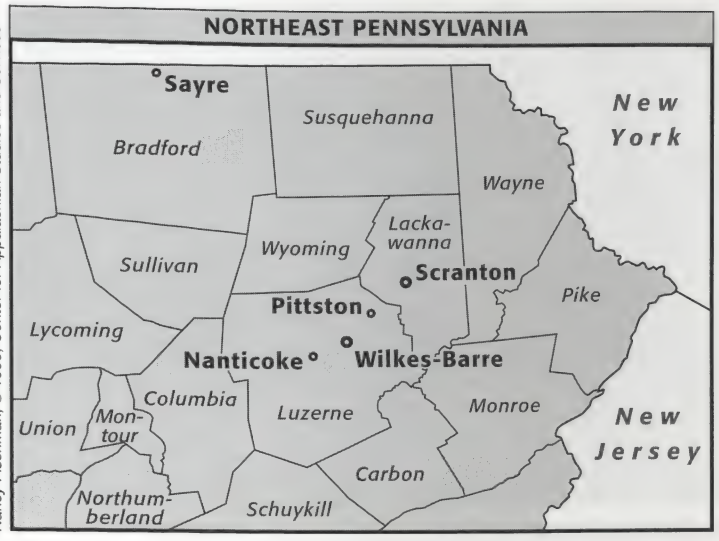
American industrialization was born in a 500-square mile region of Northern Appalachia. The enormous deposits of anthracite or "hard coal" found in Northeastern Pennsylvania fueled U.S. industry, heated homes, and drew immigrants by the tens of thousands to mine and process hundreds of millions of tons for market during most of the 19th and the early 20th centuries.

In the early 1920s, however, the single-industry economy of the anthracite region began a downward spiral. By the end of the 1950s, following the infamous Knox Mine Disaster [see "Those Men Killed Up at Knox," by Robert P. Wolensky in *Now & Then,* Vol. 14, No. 3, pp. 17-18], it nearly collapsed. Wilkes-Barre and Scranton, Pa., the region's two main cities, were the only urban areas in the United States with unemployment rates greater than 12 percent. Competition from alternative energy sources, lack of investment by coal companies in new technologies, industry and union corruption, and years of labor-management conflict had taken their toll.

With few employment alternatives, thousands of struggling families turned to permanent outmigration, long-distance commuting—and to employment by mothers, wives, and daughters in the growing garment manufacturing industry. Clothing factories flourished in Northeastern Pennsylvania, attracted by a large pool of female labor willing to work for low wages in poor conditions to support desperate families.

Courtesy of ILGWU/UNITE!

Min Matheson's organizing efforts led to a strike by Wyoming Valley, Pa., ILGWU members in 1947.



Nancy Fischman, © 1999, Center for Appalachian Studies and Services

Upon assuming the presidency of the ILGWU in 1932—a post he would hold for 35 years—Dubinsky set out to organize garment factories in the region's Wyoming Valley. He was particularly concerned because many of these factories were "runaways." Virtually all of them were set up to do nonunion contract work for larger unionized New York producers. Another problem was that organized crime owned or influenced some of the runaways, particularly in Pittston, Pa., a coal town at the Wyoming Valley's northern end.

The ILGWU had to do something about it all, as Dubinsky told Minnie (better known as "Min") Matheson in no uncertain terms during that phone conversation in 1944, and in his opinion, Min and her husband, Bill, were just the folks to spearhead the union's organizing efforts. He was persuasive. Min Matheson assumed the role of director of the newly established Wyoming Valley District while Bill Matheson became director of educational programs.

Born in 1909 to an immigrant Russian-Jewish family who had settled in Chicago, Min Lurye's youth was immersed in socialist labor culture fostered mainly by her father, Max, who headed the Chicago Cigar Makers Union. As a young woman during the Great Depression, she aided striking textile workers in Patterson, N.J., befriended radicals and socialists in Manhattan's Lower East Side, and became an organizer for the ILGWU in New York.

In the early 1940s, Min Lurye married Bill Matheson, also an ILGWU organizer, whom she had known since her youth in Chicago. The couple relocated to rural Sayre, about 100 miles northwest of Wilkes-Barre, right on the Pennsylvania-New York state line, where Bill Matheson worked for the union. Soon a daughter, Marianne, was born to Bill and Min Matheson, and not long afterwards, Betty came along. For the time being, Matheson chose a line of work that had great meaning to her: motherhood. But then Dubinsky's call brought her out of retirement.

A Legal Front

In a series of oral history interviews conducted in the 1980s, Matheson described the situation in Northeastern Pennsylvania after she moved from Sayre to begin her organizing efforts. In addition to relocating to the depressed coalfields in order to take advantage of the hard-pressed, nonunionized workforce, at least some of the garment manufacturers had an even more sinister reason for setting up shop in Northeastern Pennsylvania. Organized crime, she explained, was running into legal difficulties in New York. "They needed a legal front, and the dress industry was easy," said Matheson. "You need very little capital. All you have to do is have a handful of machines, and you're in business. And all these manufacturers in New York who were looking for cheap labor outlets loved it. Work was coming in plentifully, and these shops were growing, mushrooming."

As Matheson studied the situation, the general subservience and powerlessness of women struck her. "The women had no say at all. They did the cooking and the sewing and taking care of lunches and getting the men out to work in the mines and the kids out to school. They were active in their churches." But their civic activities in all other respects were severely curtailed. For example, though the women of Pittston did register, organized crime made sure they did not actually vote. The Mafia viewed women as being inherently second-class citizens so it ordained that only men could cast ballots. By limiting the franchise to men, organized crime could control the outcome of elections: If men wanted to work in Pittston, they would vote according to the Mafia's wishes.

"They used to just pack the union hall because they loved to hear Min talk. She could convince anyone to join the union."

—Dorothy Ney

The women were certainly no less impotent in the workplace. "They worked for weeks for nothing," recalled Matheson. "And the hours! You know, there were [labor] laws in the land, but they weren't carrying out any of the laws. The shop owners made it easy for the women to come in any time of the day or night—double,

Courtesy of ILGWU/UNITE!

In 1952, garment workers went on strike against the Emkay Manufacturing Company in Wilkes-Barre.

triple shifts."

In a 1989 interview, Minnie Caputo, a retired garment worker, described the conditions in the early days. "I started when I was 16 or 17 years old. I think I got around 10 cents an hour," she said. "The bosses stood behind you and timed you. If one girl did eight operations, he would say 'why not you?'

"If they didn't want you, they got rid of you fast," Caputo continued. "You were out. They were really sweatshops, but the factories kept this town going. There was nothing for the men."

Courtesy of ILGWU/UNITE!

Min Matheson introduced ILGWU president David Dubinsky to Wyoming Valley garment workers at a meeting in 1957.

Building a Union

Min Matheson set about the task of building a union. She recruited local people and resources who could help the ILGWU cause. Since they anticipated facing legal problems, Matheson turned to former stage actor and up-and-coming lawyer Dan Flood, who subsequently served 15 terms in the U.S. House of Representatives. "Dan helped us all the time," said Matheson. "He fit just perfectly into what we were doing."

"If we hadn't had somebody like Min Matheson with us, I think we would have given up. She was so strong. The girls knew that if we went on strike, we were going to get what we wanted. You could count on it, and you could count on her."

—Minnie Caputo

She also turned to members of local branches of other unions, such as the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA). Matheson recruited people such as Angelo "Rusty" DePasquale, a UMWA member and Pittston resident who knew the local terrain well. "We went to Pittston, and she showed me the shops," DePasquale related. "The way she talked, the way she spoke to people … She treated me well. I said, 'Look Minnie, you want me to go along? I'll help you — whatever I can do for you.'"

Matheson's work took courage in addition to her commitment to the cause and organizing skills. "It wasn't that organized crime was exactly nonviolent, you know," she pointed out. "We were scared. I don't want you to think that we were so brave. We were scared."

Though apprehensive at first, workers began to pay attention to Matheson's soapbox speeches. According to garment worker Dorothy Ney's recent recollections, "They used to just pack the union hall because they loved to hear Min talk. She could convince anyone to join the union."

Her activities weren't limited to speeches, however. Explained Ney, "Min was right on the picket line with us. She went at six o'clock in the morning like we did." Caputo observed, "If we hadn't had somebody like Min Matheson with us, I think we would have given up. She was so strong. She fought for everyone. The girls were 100 percent behind her because they knew that if we went on strike, we were going to get what we wanted. You could count on it, and you could count on her."

Matheson made full use of the local media in her organizing efforts. On several occasions, for example, she broadcast on live radio to bring attention to the workers' situation, inform the community about the problems with the "tough guys" in Pittston, and rally workers to the union cause. She penned her fiery orations with the assistance of her husband. As one garment worker put it, "Bill made the snowballs, and Min threw them."

She also used spur-of-the-moment tactics to counter the opposition. On one picket line, Pittston gangsters called her a harlot, unfit to lead the women. Furious, she phoned the union hall and asked a friend to dress her two preschool daughters in starched pinafores and bring them to the picket line. Once there, she handed the girls signs and had them march with her. How could the thugs call her such things now? The local press, of course, prominently featured the "children on the picket line" story.

During another strike, Pittston's reputed underworld boss Russell Bufalino, dubbed by the U.S. Department of Justice as "one of the most ruthless leaders of organized crime in the United States," shouted that Matheson should bring her "feeble" husband to the protest to see how long he'd last. She walked up to him, pointed her finger in his face, and announced for all to hear, "I don't need to bring Bill up here because I'm twice the man you'll ever be!" ILGWU organizer Sol Hoffman reflected in 1998, "I used to hear Min in Pittston saying these things. I remember thinking 'My God, this woman has a lot of guts!'"

Beyond Bread-and-Butter

By the late 1940s, the ILGWU's momentum began to build. Garment workers became increasingly aware of Matheson. The union and various employers negotiated contracts, and workers joined the ranks.

But while continuing to organize, Matheson worked to make sure that the union was more than a simple pay-and-benefits association. In 1948, the union opened a district health care center in Wilkes-Barre, the only one of its kind designed to serve the entire anthracite region. Garment workers and their families, from Pottsville, Pa., to Scranton received medical checkups, immunizations, examinations, screenings, and x-rays free of cost. In its first 10 years, the center

served tens of thousands of patients.

Matheson also asked ILGWU members Clementine Lyons and Bill Gable to form a chorus. It was important to do so, Matheson thought, so that the rank and file could have a social outlet. Moreover, she wanted the community to see another side to the union. "We were one of the first ILGWU districts to ever put on a musical revue," asserts Lyons. Its annual musical revue, performed from 1949 until 1976, usually sold out all its performances with most, if not all, of the proceeds going to local charities.

Courtesy of ILGWU/UNITE!

From the back of a pickup truck, Min Matheson addressed striking garment workers in Pittston. The 1958 strike targeted a garment factory owned by Pittston's criminal elements.

The chorus' popularity earned it many bookings. The group performed on Public Square in downtown Wilkes-Barre during a 1948 welcoming ceremony for President Harry Truman and at rallies for Democratic presidential candidates Adlai Stevenson and John F. Kennedy. Invitations to perform its holiday revues at the ILGWU's New York union headquarters were as routine as performances at community Labor Day, Fourth of July, and Memorial Day events.

As the union's district director, Matheson also recognized that routine factory work provided few avenues for intellectual stimulation. With her husband's guidance, she set out to develop a curriculum for workers ranging from courses on factory safety and personal health to daylong symposia on federal, state, and local policy and legislation to programs designed to enlighten workers on available community social services. The ILGWU regularly bused its members to the union's Unity House vacation and conference center nestled in the Pocono Mountains. There they attended educational programs featuring leading state and national policymakers such as Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, labor leader Walter Reuther, and at one time or another all of the Kennedy brothers — Edward, John, and Robert — to speak on topics of relevance to working people. They also traveled to Harrisburg, Pa., and Washington, D.C., to sightsee, meet with policymakers, and attend legislative hearings as well as to New York to visit ILGWU headquarters and tour landmarks such as the Statue of Liberty.

When it came to education, one of Matheson's proudest accomplishments was a partnership with Wilkes-Barre's Wilkes College (now Wilkes University), which gave working women the opportunity to do something practically unheard of — attend evening college courses. "We graduated quite a few of them," said Matheson proudly.

Paying a Heavy Price

As union membership approached several thousand in the early 1950s, the Wyoming Valley district was divided into three locals: Pittston, Nanticoke, and Wilkes-Barre. The union organized more and more factories.

Min and Bill Matheson had indeed made significant inroads, but not without having paid a heavy price. The specter of organized crime haunted them. There were problems, like the time someone threw a red paint bomb at their home or the times they had to send their children away to friends because they feared reprisals or the frequent threatening phone calls. Then the unspeakable occurred. Matheson's brother Will Lurye worked as an organizer for the ILGWU in Manhattan. One day in May of 1949, he stepped into a telephone booth on West 35th Street to make a call. Two men forced open the door and stabbed him to death with ice picks.

The tragedy stunned the labor movement. One hundred thousand garment workers marched in Lurye's funeral procession as it made its way through Manhattan's garment district. Radio commentator Walter Winchell, who closely followed the story, hinted that the reason for Lurye's murder could be found in the effectiveness of his sister's organizing activities in Pennsylvania's anthracite coalfields.

The accused murderers, lieutenants to New York crime boss Albert Anastasia, were tried and acquitted in New York in the early 1950s when several eyewitnesses suddenly changed their stories. According to the Mathesons' daughter Betty, this personal catastrophe so traumatized her mother that a simple request to pass a butterknife at the dinner table would bring on a period of melancholy. But despite her enormous loss, Matheson didn't give up. With her husband's help, she continued to transform the garment workers of Northeastern Pennsylvania into a community-minded and politically active force.

One of Matheson's proudest accomplishments was a partnership with Wilkes-Barre's Wilkes College which gave working women the opportunity to do something practically unheard of — attend evening college courses.

Reinventing a Community

During the 1950s, the ILGWU desperately wanted something done about the distressed economy of the anthracite region. The sagging job base concerned many business, community, and labor leaders. Dan Flood and then Pennsylvania Gov. George Leader responded by introducing federal and state legislation to

secure government aid for economic development.

For her part, Matheson mobilized the ILGWU into a bulwark of support for these measures. Union members testified at government hearings in Scranton, Harrisburg, and Washington, and they wrote to elected officials urging passage of the bills. The union cooperated with local private sector interests and became a member of the so-called Committee of 100, an economic development coalition engaged in raising money to lure new enterprise to Northeastern Pennsylvania. In 1956, the state legislature enacted Gov. Leader's state economic development package, thus creating the Pennsylvania Industrial Development Authority. The Authority guaranteed low interest financing to industries who agreed to locate in areas of the state with unemployment rates higher than 9 percent.

Courtesy of ILGWU/UNITE!

In 1962, Rep. Daniel J. Flood addressed ILGWU members at a Wyoming Valley union hall. Flood's legislation creating the Area Redevelopment Administration had recently been signed into law.

Russell Bufalino, dubbed by the U.S. Department of Justice as "one of the most ruthless leaders of organized crime in the United States," shouted that Matheson should bring her "feeble" husband to the protest to see how long he'd last. She walked up to him, pointed her finger in his face, and announced for all to hear, "I'm twice the man you'll ever be!"

On one occasion, Matheson pulled out all the stops in a dramatic performance before the U.S. Senate Labor and Public Welfare Committee. She urged members to pass Flood's Area Economic Development Bill which would establish the Area Redevelopment Administration (ARA) within the U.S. Department of Commerce to provide federal grants and low-interest loans for enterprises in the depressed Appalachian coalfields. A Washington journalist characterized Matheson's oration as "one which would assuredly convince wavering politicians to vote in favor of the measure."

In 1961, President Kennedy signed Flood's bill into law. The ARA served as the prototype for the Washington, D.C.-based Appalachian Regional Commission, which came into existence in the mid-1960s to foster development throughout the entire Appalachian region, from New York state to Mississippi.

Along with significant private sector investment, government aid lured many new employers to the Wyoming Valley. The era of so-called public-private partnership for economic development had arrived, and Pennsylvania's anthracite coal region led the way. New businesses put a significant dent in double-digit unemployment that had dogged the region for a fair part of the 20th century. The region's economy began a gradual turnaround. Some 80,000 new jobs were created throughout the hard coal region from 1960 to 1980. In some locales, unemployment dropped to a low of 7 percent.

The ILGWU's work with public and private interests in advocating economic diversification showed how far the union had moved beyond bread-and-butter issues. Min Matheson's legacy in the Wyoming Valley stretches far beyond the garment factories. With the assistance of many, including the keen intellect of her husband, she helped transform the powerless women garment workers she found when she first arrived into a community-conscious coalition and a powerful social movement. Garment workers were now part of a vibrant union that not only organized and negotiated contracts which increased wages but also stood at the forefront of the reinvention of the community in which it had carved out a stake. Union members learned that they could indeed have access to those who made the policies that impacted their daily lives. As Gov. Leader, a close friend and ally of Min Matheson and the ILGWU, explained in a 1995 interview, "The ILGWU was located in other parts of the state, but they weren't a force like they were in the Wyoming Valley."

Leader credited Matheson with the ILGWU's widespread impact on Valley life. "Min wasn't just a labor organizer. She was a political organizer. She was an educator. There is no doubt about the fact that Min had mobilized the ILGWU as a political and community force. They had a great influence on my industrial development policy. She was a great force—a courageous, brave woman." Flood credited Matheson and the ILGWU for the "silver lining that it brought to the dark clouds of the economy of an area once dependent upon a single industry: coal mining."

Min and Bill Matheson departed the Wyoming Valley for a new assignment with the ILGWU union label department in 1963—against the vehement protests of Wyoming Valley union members. When she arrived in 1944, Matheson found about 650 union members in a handful of organized shops. Remarkably, by the time the Mathesons departed, the Wyoming Valley District consisted of 11,000 members in 168 organized factories.

Coming Home

The Mathesons finished their union careers by leading the efforts to create a union label to inform consumers about the importance of buying American-made, union products. They helped make the label's associated music and lyrics household staples across America. The couple returned to the area in June of 1972 to live

out their retirement years close to family and friends. "I could have retired anywhere—Chicago, New York," explained Matheson. "But to me, this is home."

Matheson remained active in community affairs. Just a few weeks following her return, she helped form the Flood Victims Action Council to advocate for the needs of residents who lost all they owned to the wrath of Tropical Storm Agnes. Toward the end of her life, she received numerous awards, including the Mother Jones Award for labor activism from the Pennsylvania Labor History Society. Matheson passed away on December 8, 1992 in Wilkes-Barre's General

"She was a great force – a courageous, brave woman."
–former Gov. George Leader

Hospital. Her husband Bill had preceded her in death in 1987. Their work, however, is far from being just a memory.

Matheson remains very much a legend: a hero in many circles, the stuff of folklore. On September 24, 1999, the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission and the Pennsylvania Labor History Society will dedicate a state historical marker located on Wilkes-Barre's Public Square to Min L. Matheson. The marker recognizes the contributions of both Matheson and her husband, Bill, in building one of the most active and community-spirited ILGWU districts anywhere in the nation. It commemorates their tireless dedication to the hard-working people and recovering communities of Pennsylvania's hard coal region. N&T

Another version of this article appears in *Pennsylvania Heritage* magazine, summer 1999, published by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. *Now & Then* readers can call 1-800-747-7790 for a complimentary copy.

Kenneth C. Wolensky is a historian with the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission in Harrisburg, Pa. Robert P. Wolensky is a professor of sociology at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. The Wolensky brothers are writing a book on Min Matheson and the ILGWU. The interview material included in this article is drawn from the ongoing 300-interview Wyoming Valley Oral History Project, codirected by the authors.

The Cuban Poet at the Holston River
for Jeff Daniel Marion

In New Market, Tennessee, verdant,
fertile Appalachian earth, I stand
at the mouth of the Holston River

by the edge of the edge and the sudden
urge to leap overpowers me, the lure
of such clear water.

Its turbulence ravishing, its whirl of water
a call—I stand thousands of miles
from the place I call home,

but this clear, crisp day in Tennessee carries
the promise of spring. Fish jump in the air.
A certain leap out of these cleansing

waters, a cascade of opaline hues. I think
of compound colors, of what has brought
me this far, a motion

much like that of this rushing water,
electric current flows down the river,
succumbs to the drag and pull,

takes what it must down the banks.
Here in tobacco country, Jefferson County,
goodness etched on people's faces,

eyes frozen blue, a smile of friendship.
These are strong folk, hardy, secure, strong-
willed. River, earth, tobacco.

Simple things. Enough water for a thousand rebirths.

—Virgil Suarez

Virgil Suarez is a Cuban-born poet and fiction writer who has lived most of his life in the United States. He is the author of several works of fiction and most recently of the poetry collections You Come Singing *and* Garabato Poems. *In 1997, during a visit to Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City, Tenn., where he read at the Appalachian Center, he visited the Holston River with friends. This poem comes from that experience, the first in a sequence of poems inspired by naturally breathtaking places in the United States. He teaches creative writing at Florida State University and lives with his wife and two daughters in Tallahassee.*

Our Bars

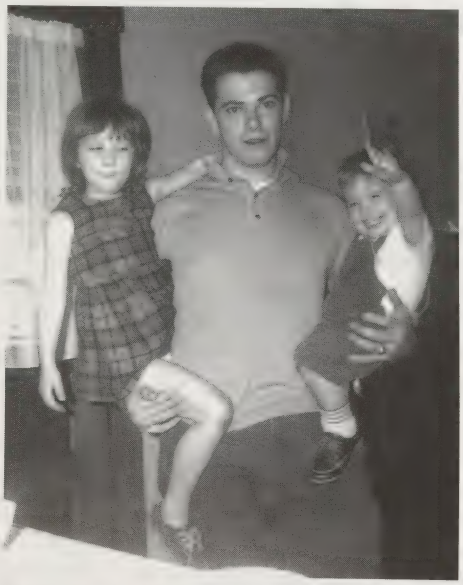
by Kelley Rae

A young West Virginia girl is introduced to a rough-and-tumble, all-too-real world in the bars of Route 28.

Bars are a family thing.

I was about five when my family bought the bar on Route 28, a long road that winds through the foothills of the Allegheny Mountains. Everything we did, everywhere we went was situated along this road that traveled from Maryland and into West Virginia, weaving into and out of the places of my past.

Both sets of my grandparents lived along Route 28. Some of my schools were on Route 28. Our church was on Route 28 — and so were our bars.



Otis Martin

Four-year-old Kelley hams it up with her brother in her father's arms.

Our very own family-owned bar was about midway between Boonie's and the Woodland Inn. Boonie's was named after the owner — a wealthy man, about 60, with a peg leg that never curtailed his ability to chase the ladies. Boonie's was about spitting distance from the Maryland State Line in Wiley Ford, W.Va. The Ridgeley Bridge crossed the Potomac River from Cumberland, Md., into West Virginia, and if the Marylanders were lucky enough to get past the Ridgeley speed traps, they could make it to Boonie's all right. In general, Marylanders, especially those from Cumberland, were considered city folk, and therefore, they were suspect. The routine was hard on Boonie during the weekends, as he tried to keep the Maryland roughs from starting trouble while he dragged that wooden leg behind him as he walked. But Boonie could handle his own. He would often ban people for life if they caused him too much aggravation.

My father was a regular at Boonie's before he met my mother. As a matter of fact, he got charged with attempted murder near Boonie's.

The way I heard it told was that my father, who was about 20 at the time, was flirting with a married woman — from Maryland, no less. I don't know whether or not my father knew she was married, but her husband didn't care. He was a large burly man about twice my father's age. My father was a large man, too, so he could usually take care of himself. While my father didn't like to start fights, he never shied away when there was one.

It seems the woman's husband thought he was going to teach a lesson to a young West Virginia upstart. The man's anger couldn't compete with my father's, however. My father beat up the man, who then somehow fell over an embankment, which is how the attempted murder came into the picture: The man nearly died. This was about six months before my father married my mother. Boonie's is a Route 28 landmark in more than one way.

Both sets of my grandparents lived along Route 28. Some of my schools were on Route 28. Our church was on Route 28 — and so were our bars.

After I was born, my father often went there alone, but my mother wasn't allowed to go there without him. Of course,

my mother didn't listen. She would often venture out to Boonie's with a girlfriend because she realized that my father had his own agenda: His roving eye didn't stop with the one married woman. When my father found out about my mother's wanderings, he'd come looking for her. At that time in West Virginia, most of the bars were member bars so Boonie had a small window that opened at about eye level in the door. He used it to screen potential customers. If it were my father, Boonie would give my mother a signal, and she'd slip out the back door before my father could tear into a rage at the sight of her.

Otis Martin

Kelley's grandmother, Aggie (in the middle, back row), is in her element as she sits with the 1967 Woodland Inn shuffleboard team.

I remember being at Boonie's once. "Proud Mary" played on the jukebox. The metal barstools were covered in that red Naugahyde — ripped edges sticking out here and there. The whole place had a blue glow from the neon light advertising Pabst Blue Ribbon.

Boonie's was pretty upscale compared to the Woodland Inn, where my grandmother liked to go. The Woodland was out past the little town of Short Gap, W.Va., on Route 28. The tobacco-chewing farm folk were Grandma's kind. It was a log cabin, no more than 24 feet by 50 feet, with a potbellied stove sitting in the middle of the floor. My brother was a toddler, and I was about four when we first got to walk into the Woodland wonderland. I liked to stand near the potbellied stove and warm up on cold winter days. My brother and I would play shuffleboard while Grandma drank bourbon and played poker.

Given the family tendencies, the idea to buy a bar was one everyone seemed to like. I think Granddad's motive was to keep my father around more. There was a time when my father went off on "Gypsy Tours," as they were called then, but it was really just another name for a party-on-wheels. He'd mount his Harley Davidson motorcycle (pronounced "motor-sickle"), take off with a band of bikers, and be gone for days at a time. So according to my grandfather's logic, a bar business close to home might ensure that my father would remain nearby.

My family called our bar the Chateau. It was a grand-sounding name to my ears, but it was really a hole-in-the-wall whose only distinguishing feature was that it stood midway between Boonie's and the Woodland Inn on Route 28.

The long wooden bar had dime vendors attached to it about five feet apart. They dispensed pistachio nuts that would stain my fingers red for days. Eating them was like eating something exotic. I couldn't feed enough dimes into those machines or eat enough of those nuts. I would open them, put them into piles on the paper bar napkins, and then stuff them all at once into my mouth. When my fingers got sore from pulling them apart, I'd take handfuls and stuff them into every pocket. Big jars of pickled eggs stood on the bar and could be had for about the same price as the pistachios. Grandma kept saltines behind the counter. She dispensed them at no extra charge to folks who liked to eat their eggs smashed between crackers like a sandwich.

Otis Martin

Kelley's mother, known as Tootie, is ready to party, New Year's Eve, 1963.

The great drawing card for the Chateau was the rock 'n' roll bands my father hired every weekend. Those bands usually filled the place.

I would go there in the afternoon while preparations were being made for the night. My grandmother sprinkled sawdust on the floor to clean it. She'd turn on the jukebox really loud, and we'd dance all over that sawdust, swooshing and sliding. I would imagine all of the fun the grown-ups were going to have when those rock 'n' roll bands got playing there at night, wishing I were old enough … When we got through with our little sawdust dance, Grandma would get out the big broom, and I would sit on it as she moved it across the floor, sweeping up the sawdust.

In the afternoon, neighborhood men would come in and sit at the bar and talk to my grandfather. That's where I heard, on more than one occasion, the story about a young couple.

The old guy on the barstool would be sipping a shot glass of bourbon with a beer back and smoking a Lucky Strike — unfiltered, of course. "Why I never heared told such an event as happened like to that young couple. I know they was about dumbfounded when the sheriff got to 'em."

"How did it happen?" my grandfather would ask, even though I know he had heard the story about a hundred times before.

"Well, seems they was dragging them fast cars off that straight piece a road there on Route 28, and the car they was in — you know, Otis, the one

what makes them loud shots ever so often?—Well, seems it were shaking out a control and got to where it was driving like halfways up in the air on the side a the road. They both just fell out and got drug alongside that car for a good hunnert foot. Ripped ever' stitch a clothing off they done had on. They was nekked as jaybirds when the sheriff found 'em. He saw pieces a their clothes strewn all over the road. One of the man's shirtsleeves was hanging off a Ms. McDaniel's mailbox. I could see her now, comin' out and findin' that sleeve stuck on her I-have-mail flag, and then throwing a hissy-fit, thinkin' them crazy kids had some sort a party goin' on with pieces a their clothes all over the damn neighborhood.

"Well, the sheriff had to take 'em in like they was, nekked and all. He tried coverin' 'em up with them raincoats they have in the sheriff car, but you could see right through. Sheriff said he was gonna charge 'em with indecent 'sposure, 'cause you know, he couldn't prove they was a draggin' on that road."

Otis Martin

Kelley's mother, Tootie (second from left), celebrates New Year's Eve at the Chateau in 1963.

There were many characters at that Chateau. I call them characters because each one had some characteristic that distinguished them, like the one-armed woman who, according to my mother, had a chip on her shoulder. Mom said you didn't want to get hit by her one good arm. She was a coarse woman—as some of them were around those parts.

About five o'clock, the Cannen boys would come in shouting, "Hey, hey! What's the word?" And everyone at the bar would shout back "Thunderbird!" because that's what the Cannen boys drank.

Dad drank Wild Turkey with a water back, or just plain cheap wine. Grandma preferred her pony bottles of beer. Pat P. drank blended bourbon. She was a very large, beautiful woman from South Cumberland, just over the state line in Maryland by the B&O Railroad. She was loud and drunk most of the time. Her younger sister often followed her around, and it was a good thing because Pat would get drunk and then undress, no matter where she was. And since Pat was usually drunk, she was usually without clothes. Her younger sister was the only one who could keep them on her.

Pat loved my grandmother for some reason, and her affection had an unusual way of manifesting itself. She once bit Grandma on the cheek so hard the bruise lasted for weeks.

Everyone got along real good mostly—except on dance nights. These people could see each other every day of the week and not have an unkind word to say to one another, but on dance nights, there was always a fight.

Otis Martin

Kelley's dad stands next to his convertible (ca. 1957). A cousin called him the James Dean of the area.

Of course, five o'clock was when I had to go back to my grandmother's house where my cousins would watch me. As I said, bars are a family thing. Mom worked the door and waited on tables. Grandma, Granddad, and Dad tended bar. Grandma waited tables too. Although Dad often hosted, his most important function was to be the bouncer. They called him the peacemaker.

The drinking age was 18 in West Virginia then. My father—handsome, tall, and muscular, with an eye for the ladies—patrolled the dance floor. That was his job, keeping everyone under control. He carried a three-foot police-issue billy club. Dad was friendly, and most everyone liked him, but they feared him too. His trademark maneuver was to take his billy club and place it in between the legs of the troublemaker and jack him up. Then he'd walk the troublemaker to the door, billy club still in place, and throw him out. If the troublemaker was sufficiently humbled and hadn't caused too much of a ruckus, my father would let him back in if he paid another cover charge.

Grandma could get in on the action, too. She loaded a shotgun with rock salt just in case some of the trouble got out-of-hand, but after it accidentally fell and went off, loading a pound of rock salt into her backside, she decided against it.

My father never liked to follow many rules. He was shut down once there at the Chateau for refilling miniatures with liquor, which is illegal. The state police came in and shut down the place and took away my father in handcuffs. My father and my grandfather used the time to paint the place and recover the booths in that red Naugahyde so popular at the time.

While my father patrolled the floor for troublemakers, my mother would patrol the floor for women who paid too much attention to my father. That was the way their young married days went: my father chasing trouble and my mother chasing my father's bad habits.

Mom had her share of encounters at the Chateau. My mother is a small, extremely reserved woman. She has a wonderful ability to ignore what she doesn't like. Her worst scuffle was with a South Cumberland woman who was very wild. In defiance of my mother, she was messing around with my father. When my mother tried to set her straight, the woman pulled out my mother's earring. Well, Mom grabbed her by the neck, threw her down, and placed her knee on the woman's chest before some bikers stepped in and broke up the fight.

I don't know how my mother lived that way. Her size never stopped her from doing what she could to protect herself—except when it came to my father. Pregnant with me, she married my father when she had just turned 16. By the time she was three months pregnant with me, he slapped her. And by the night I was born, he was with another woman. This established a relationship that was similar to the one Dad's parents had. Mom

While my father patrolled the floor for troublemakers, my mother would patrol the floor for women who paid too much attention to my father.

quickly learned how to get along with Dad when she wanted to, but most times, her stubborn streak kept getting her hit—especially during the Chateau years when Mom was in her early 20s and quite feisty herself. Mostly he hit her when she openly defied him.

They had their share of good times though. After the Chateau closed on dance nights, Mom and Dad would go drag racing on Route 46 near Keyser, W.Va. Dad had a Chevy convertible with a racing engine. He liked to tempt fate. Mom went along for the heck of it—she says. She tore the transmission out of it twice. She didn't get hit for that. By the time she became pregnant with my brother, when I was three years old, it became harder and harder for her to chase around after my father. She got wore down. The Chateau finished her.

About a year after it had reopened, the Chateau burned—or was torched—I don't know which. By that time, my parents had gotten a divorce (they would later remarry), and my mother had moved back to her father's house across the street from my father's family. My brother and I went with her. When she heard that the bar burned down, she smiled. N&T

Kelley Rae is a graduate student and student of novelist Lee Smith's at North Carolina State University in Raleigh, N.C. "Our Bars" is an excerpt from her thesis, currently a work-in-progress.

Sergeant Father, Sir

In a camp house near the water, he keeps his boots in a perfect
row, lace ends draped over the tongues, beneath the dresser.
The moon has never established such bearings in the sky.

Recounting the fish he's caught, in the dipped-black blueness of the night,
he'll wonder why I'm late, and he'll not stop to consider
the roadside where the trails lead, to and from the many rivers.

In the beginning, my steps were quick and firm as boot camp recruits,
alert and ready not for this silence, but for a war,
the nefarious dance of the Devil Dog, Teufel Hunde.

Dark and noiseless as his porch, where he stands perched at-ease,
I lay down in the grass, in the beautiful (Belleau) woods,
poised listening for him to scream, in the distance, for a son.

—Tyler Parris

West Virginian Tyler Parris is a youth worker and writer. He holds a bachelor of arts degree in English from Marshall University in Huntington, W.Va., where he received a Margaret Walker Creative Writing Award for Poetry from the College Language Association. He has served as assistant poetry editor and poetry editor for Et Cetera, *Marshall University's literary magazine. His work has appeared in* Otherwise *and* Et Cetera.

The Infamous Weaver Family

by Alex Whitson

Extending traditional mountain hospitality to particularly colorful neighbors is almost more than one family can bear.

In our little community of Millertown, not far from Knoxville, Tennessee, everyone looked forward to Sunday as a day of rest and church-going, of big dinners and lazy afternoons. Sometimes neighbors would drop by for pleasant conversations and perhaps homemade ice cream or cake and coffee. There was one exception, however, folks whom no one welcomed. They were the Weaver family.

The Weavers lived about a mile from our farm. They raised a little tobacco, a few vegetables — and little else. They possessed no farm animals, except for a nanny goat. The goat not only provided nourishing milk but also kept the grass from smothering the Weavers' little shack. It also pulled a wagon of sorts on their many visits around the community.

There were three members in the Weaver family: "Toddie," the father; "Maudie," the mother; and 15-year-old Ernie. The father had gotten his nickname (pronounced "Tow-dy") because he seemed to be always carrying a tow sack across his shoulder. Maudie kept her hair dyed bright red and talked in a constant, compulsive stream. Ernie couldn't be classified as retarded, but my father once explained that while Ernie's body had developed normally, his brain was still in the fetal stage.

Ernie was struck on my sister Irene. Whenever he showed up, she would hide. That didn't stop Ernie from running around the house calling her name. If I had been a little more his size, I would have tripped him. Ernie was an outcast among his peers in the community. During the warm days, he would come to school smelling like a nanny goat, and in the winter, he wore a bag of asafetida around his neck, that awful smelling material obtained from roots and certain plants that was thought to ward off colds. The odor made him an instant stranger in the overcrowded classroom. Even the teacher, Mrs. Moore, returned his papers at arm's length. We all stood clear of him the best we could. I doubt if he ever took a complete bath. As a student, he was loud, boisterous, and undisciplined.

I always thought my mother's definition of hospitality a little too generous when it came to the Weavers. Maybe she felt sorry for them. To me, the Weaver family — especially Ernie — was obnoxious, offensive, and vulgar.

The Weavers' most frequent visits came on a Sunday. Fortunately, you could hear them coming before they came into sight. What alerted us was the sound of "Dem Golden Slippers" coming from a windup portable phonograph resting on

For the younger children, not knowing what ill thoughts my parents harbored, the Weavers were a welcome diversion. "Uncle Toddie" was little more than a child himself.

Maudie's lap. She would be sitting on a contraption made from a discarded door fitted with a child's tricycle wheels. Toddie would be in front, leading the goat with the barefoot Ernie dawdling behind. A friendly wave would be taken as an invita-

tion to stop and spend the day, including meals. Most people called them moochers.

On this particular Sunday, our family was looking forward to a rare visit from my grandparents, and when the sound of "Dem Golden Slippers" assailed the quiet morning air, my father grumbled something about "those darn pests again." We did not see my grandparents very often as they lived on the other side of the county, and we all wanted to make their visit a memorable experience. The house had undergone a thorough cleaning: curtains washed, cakes baked, chickens killed, and beds allotted. An unwelcome intrusion into the occasion would be disaster.

"This time, I'm going to tell them to get lost," declared my dad, but it was too late. The Weavers were already in the yard.

"Howdy Neighbor! Purty day, ain't hit?" Maudie shouted over the footstomping music.

"Would you turn that thing off?" shouted my father.

For the younger children, not knowing what ill thoughts my parents harbored, the Weavers were a welcome diversion. "Uncle Toddie" was little more than a child himself and entertained the younger ones with his hand puppet. He made the puppet talk by projecting his voice; much later, I learned it was called ventriloquism. Maudie also had her talents. She read fortunes by looking at coffee grounds in the bottoms of cups.

On some Sundays, the Weavers' visits could be tolerated, but this Sunday was special. The problem was how to get rid of them without hurting their feelings, but Toddie had already tied the nanny goat to a porch post. Maudie sniffed the air with her sharp nose.

"Is that chicken I smell?"

"We're having company," explained my mother, hoping Maudie would take the hint.

"Well now, I ain't had chicken in a month of Sundays!"

I saw my mother grimace, heard my father clear his throat. I thought he was going to tell them to leave, but he only stared hard at my mother.

When my grandparents finally arrived, we all rushed toward the car to greet them, but Maudie was there ahead of everybody. My grandfather was hardly out of the car before she thrust her outstretched hand in his face.

"Howdy! I'm Maudie. That thars my husband Toddie. Come and meet these nice people, Toddie," she called.

My grandfather was flabbergasted. The look on his face asked: Who are these people?

My mother hugged her parents and explained that the Weavers were people who lived down the road. I noticed she didn't call them neighbors, perhaps wanting to distance herself from Maudie's rude behavior. While my parents were making their guests comfortable on the front porch, Maudie and her husband were inspecting the automobile. They peered at the leather seats, fingered the steering wheel, and kicked the tires. My grandfather watched their activities with apprehension, while my grandmother stared at the goat wagon, her face expressing awe.

Satisfied that she had absorbed all the wonders of the car, Maudie joined us on the porch.

"You people from town, huh? I been thar once. Went to one of them pitcher shows. Don't reckon I'd fit in. Too many stuck-up people, uppity merchants, and noisy streetcars."

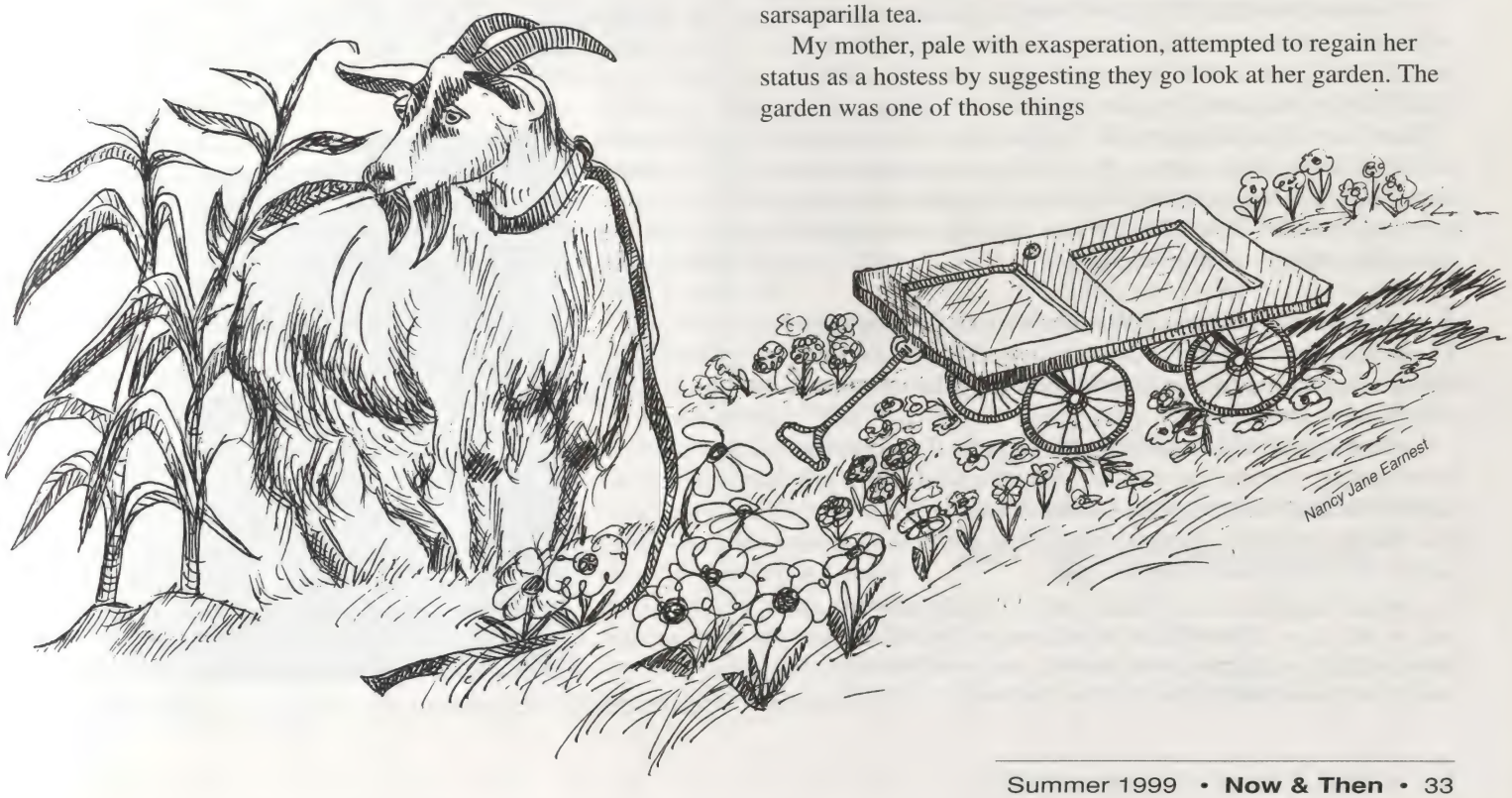
"I don't believe I caught your name, Mrs. …" my grandmother began.

"Weaver," my mother supplied, sinking lower in her seat.

The Weavers' presence presented her with a very uncomfortable dilemma: how to get rid of them without violating her sense of hospitality in front of her guests, especially since my grandfather was a minister. My father sat in reserved silence, but I guess he was seething inside.

Luckily, my sister Mary Alice broke the tension by emerging from the kitchen with a tray of glasses and a tall pitcher of cold sarsaparilla tea.

My mother, pale with exasperation, attempted to regain her status as a hostess by suggesting they go look at her garden. The garden was one of those things



she took great pride in and spent a great deal of time and labor making a good producer. We practically lived off it all summer.

Maudie was content to sit on the porch and sip sarsaparilla tea. "Shucks! I don't want to see no garden — or a vineyard either, for that matter. My brother had one — a vineyard, that is. The bugs ate the vines before the leaves could sprout."

All this time, I was wondering where Ernie was. Was he still looking for Irene?

By the time my parents and their guests had returned from inspecting the garden, it was time for lunch. To my mother's distress, Maudie had already invited herself into the kitchen while my sisters were setting the table. She inspected the chocolate cake cooling on the windowsill, sniffed the pots on the stove, and checked the chickens roasting in the oven, declaring to everyone that roast chicken was her favorite dish. It was all my mother could do to keep her Christian temper.

The dining table was only large enough to seat the adults, so my father had set up a makeshift table of sawhorses and planks on the back porch for us children. Naturally, Ernie showed up in time to eat. He looked tired out. I laughed to myself. He would never find Irene. She was having dinner in my room in the attic.

I didn't have an opportunity to know firsthand what went on at the adult table, but my sister Mary Alice filled me in. She called it a disaster. She swore that Maudie and Toddie broke every rule in the etiquette book. They ate with their fingers, chewed noisily with their mouths open, and belched loudly to the utter disgust of the other diners. The most appalling event, according to my sister, was when Maudie reached across the table for a second helping of mashed potatoes and knocked over a bowl of mother's homemade cranberry sauce, ruining her best damask tablecloth.

Maudie and her husband were still at the table when my parents and their guests retired to the front porch. I was in the process of eating a piece of chocolate cake when I heard my mother scream. I rushed to see what had happened.

My mother had fainted. Her feet were elevated by a chair cushion and my grandmother was unbuttoning clothing around her neck. My father's face was something to see. It was flushed red, and his mouth was grim as he rushed toward the garden.

Then I saw what had happened. The goat had jerked the porch post from its moorings, causing the roof to come crashing down on one end. Not only that, but the goat had dragged the wagon across my mother's flower bed and was standing in the garden, calmly munching her tender corn.

I don't know what happened after that because my grandfather sent me back to the kitchen. I do know the Weavers left suddenly, taking their goat wagon, their phonograph, and their mentally deficient son with them.

In a way, I guess I actually miss the Weavers. They provided an interesting, amusing interlude in what was, for the most part, a fairly mundane country existence. From my attic window on quiet Sunday mornings, though, I think I can still hear the faint sounds of "Dem Golden Slippers." N&T

Now retired with his wife in Florida after a 26-year teaching career in Michigan, Alex Whitson grew up near Knoxville, Tenn. When he isn't writing, he paints, travels, and mows the lawn. His stories have been published in Cricket Magazine.

Mountain Man

Sprawled precariously on an outcrop,
you study peregrine falcons,
yet when you soar in the belly of a silver bird,
you are frightened.
Your face reminds me
of a cornered wild animal.

You are lost in New York
where you cannot find the sun,
the slant of its rays
broken by tall buildings.
You wander in circles,
squinting, head tilted skyward.
Nature, you say, is not laid out in grids.

You scratch your head in Central Park,
when the drinking fountain is dry.
Where do you find water in cities? you ask.
Deep in the forest back home,
you would fashion a cup from a laurel leaf
to ladle icy water from a stream.

Urban life puzzles you;
you try Atlanta, Los Angeles too,
but decide to return to Appalachia,
where days are simple,
where gunshots in the night
mean someone has killed dinner,
not the neighbor next door.

—Susan Snowden

Susan Snowden's poem "Mountain Man" won the 1996 James Still Award for Poetry from the Appalachian Writers' Association (AWA). She again won the AWA's James Still Award for Poetry in 1997 for a selection of three short poems. Her poems have appeared in Waterways: Poetry in the Mainstream, Vermont Ink, The Poet's Pen, Writer's Exchange, *and other journals. Her work has also been included in an anthology of women's poetry entitled* Raising Voices *(Burning Bush Press, 1997). A full-time writer and editor, Snowden resides in Arden, N.C.*

Nick Stump

Proud Member of the Hillbilly Nation

by Laurene Scalf

A Bluegrass transplant remembers his Eastern Kentucky roots.

With a thumbnail, he scrapes a macula of paint from freshly scrubbed hands. "We're doing some remodeling to the house," he says. "My daughter's been helping me paint."

The house is in the Highlands section of Louisville, Ky., just across the street from Tyler Park and halfway across the state from Hindman, Ky., where the term *highlands* is literal. Hindman is where Michael Stamper, now known as Nick Stump — screenwriter, poet, songwriter, and member of the Louisville, Ky.-based Metropolitan Blues All-Stars band — grew up.

Courtesy of Nick Stump

Nick Stump

He was born in Hazelgreen, Ky., on Columbus Day in 1948, the only child of a county agent father and housewife mother. "The Stampers have lived up there since the 1600s," he says. "The first one came from England in 1640." He talks to his parents, Alice and Albert, three to four times a week, wherever they may be. "We're a two-trailer family. They have one in Booneville, Ky., and one in Indian Rocks Beach, Fla., that they go to in the wintertime. My father's reached high on the chain."

Getting An Education

His father's profession determined how young Mike spent his time. "I cut a lot of weeds and hoed a lot of corn. My dad felt he had to keep a big garden. He didn't like working in a garden, but he loved telling people what to do. So I was his experiment."

Stamper didn't like school — "I was not a really great student. I was vaguely alienated but not sure what that was" — but he loved to read. "James Still, the Kentucky author, was my librarian when I was growing up, and he was pretty much an old curmudgeon, but he was kind enough to guide my reading. That was critical to my education.

"You know, I love Eastern Kentucky, but I can't live there anymore."

"When I was a kid, I read all those little orange books like *Simon Kenton,*

Trailblazer. I guess I read almost the whole library at Hindman High School before I left. My father would get so angry when I'd come home with a whole load of library books. He knew I wasn't going to study. But that's helped me to fake it ever since then. Four years of good solid reading is a good thing for anybody."

Another major source of his education was WLAC radio out of Nashville, Tenn., a black music station that played blues late at night. "I had this big Philco radio, one of these big floor-standing jobs, and I'd hide my cigarettes in the back of it. I'd lie there in the night and smoke cigarettes and listen to all this cool blues music and, man, I just imagined what I'd like to be able to do."

"James Still, the Kentucky author, was my librarian when I was growing up, and he was pretty much an old curmudgeon, but he was kind enough to guide my reading."

He ordered blues records by mail from Randy's Record Mart, a service of WLAC. His father took notice. "My dad came in one day with a record called *Mountain Music of Eastern Kentucky,* a Folkways record. And I kind of begrudgingly agreed to listen to it. There came on this one guy, his name was Roscoe Holcomb, known in folk circles as a kind of bluesy mountain player. I could relate to what he was doing, even though he was playing a banjo and singing this kind of strange thing. I said, 'I like that.' My daddy said, 'You wanna go meet him?'

"So he took me to Hazard the next Saturday, and Roscoe was playing on the courthouse steps. And he introduced me to him, and it was a real big deal to me to meet somebody who was on a record and to know that somebody who was from where I was from could be on a record."

College "had the advantage," he says, of taking Stamper away from home. He escaped all the way to Pippa Passes, Ky., where he attended Alice Lloyd College. "I didn't even get out of the county." He was asked to leave Alice Lloyd for "grades and trouble and general misbehavior." He then went to Lees College in Jackson, Ky., "the only college on the face of the earth that would take me after I was kicked out of Alice Lloyd," and majored in theater.

"I did the worst Stanley Kowalski in the history of American theatre. I played him as a hillbilly. I suspect I was just dreadful." He deprecates the suggestion that it must have taken some ability to get the role. "It was a small school. There were not many actors. I knew I was not going to step from college onto the New York stage, so when I left college, I went into music because you get paid at the end of the day."

Making a Living

In 1968, Stamper left the Kentucky mountains for the bluegrass region of the state. He enrolled at the University of Kentucky and got married. A year later, he dropped out of school and started playing music with Rodney Hatfield. "It was the late 1960s: I was meeting all these new people, hearing all these new ideas — it was an amazing time. But I was married and had a young baby, so there was the kind of desperation that goes with all that entwined with the Summer of Love. I missed the Summer of Love."

He did not, however, miss the war. When he was drafted, he "ran and joined the Air Force to avoid the Army." He was stationed in Thailand at an intelligence-gathering triservice post on the Laotian border, from where he would fly over Vietnam. This was farther from home than he had bargained for. "I aspired to go to Lexington. I did not aspire to go to Southeast Asia."

When he got out of the service, he took a night job in a liquor store and started playing music again. "All this was in the midst of divorce — one of those years when everything in your life changes." He formed a bluegrass duo with guitarist Frank Schaap, and they played together for nearly three years. "Then Frank took off. By then, I was remarried and with a pregnant wife and was looking for options. I was painting houses and doing rough labor."

He again went back to school and took a media course, which landed him a job at Appalshop as part of a University Year in Action — "kind of a VISTA program for students." He stayed on after the program was finished. "So I found myself in Eastern Kentucky again, in Whitesburg, not playing music at all, doing a weekly television series and writing reviews for a magazine. These things just kind of twist around and turn in on you. You never know what you'll be doing."

Back to the Bluegrass

He may not have known what he would be doing, but he did know where he wanted to do it. He returned to Lexington and hooked up with his former music partners. "Frank and I started playing our duo again, and we got ourselves a little five-night-a-week gig at a place called the Fishnet. And Rodney Hatfield came in and asked if he could sit in — ran down the street to his place to get some harps — and he came back the next night and asked if he could sit in again. You know, that's how you get in a band. You just keep sitting in 'til they hire you. So we had a trio then. And then we added drummers and bass players. We've gone through a couple of those, but David [White] and Ricky [Baldwin] have been with us for most of the time."

With singer Wanda Jackson, they began playing regularly at Lynagh's Irish Pub in the early 1980s, where they were now known as the Metropolitan Blues All-Stars, and Michael Stamper was known as Nick Stump. They garnered an enthusiastic local following. "Wanda had all kinds of health problems, and she quit the band a couple of weeks before she died. Caroline Dahl was in and out, a great piano player. She got homesick for San Francisco, though.

"It was a real big deal to me to meet somebody who was on a record and to know that somebody who was from where I was from could be on a record."

"Change aggravates the audience more than it ever aggravates the band.

When somebody leaves the band, people always go, 'What happened to Whoever-it-is? What are you gonna do without So-and-So?' And you go, 'Well, we're gonna play around ten o'clock.'"

The band recorded an album — *Trying Times* — on Appalshop's June Appal label. "There was pressure on me," he says, "because we were getting ready to record, and we didn't have any songs.

"Sometimes I feel like I don't so much write songs as find them. Sometimes it starts with a little guitar riff that happens when you're just doodling. Sometimes it's just nonsense words that you throw in there just to keep it going. Sometimes you have a title and all you gotta do is fill in the rest of the song. Like "Night Patrol" — I thought of the name, and I wrote the song all in one fell swoop. I wrote all those songs for that record in a fairly short period of time. And I think it's some of my best work." The record is now available on CD from a German label, Taxman. "You can walk into a record store and order it. I don't think anyone stocks it."

Courtesy of Nick Stump

Nick Stump and Rodney Hatfield started playing together in the late 1960s. They actually grew up about 70 miles from each other, but they had to get out of Eastern Kentucky to find each other and their kind of music.

"I did the worst Stanley Kowalski in the history of American theatre. I played him as a hillbilly."

Kentucky Roots Music

The band's albums reflect the Eastern Kentucky roots of some of its members, with songs like "Deep Mine Blues" and "Coalmine, Moonshine" on *Devil Gets His Due* and the title song of *Hillbilly Nation.* "I must give credit to New Grass Revival and their poem "Hillbilly Nation." They used to play — and we used to play — at an annual concert in Wise County, Va., called Hillbilly Nation Celebration. The idea of attaching an ethnic group and the word *nation* is not a new concept, but the words sound good and sing good. And so I sat down to write the song."

Their roots were too little evident, however, to suit some people. They played in Chicago at the Goodman Theatre on a Studs Terkel radio show. "It was an Appalshop extravaganza. The woman running the program — God love her, she really worked hard to put this thing together, and it was really wonderful — I think she was uncomfortable with the fact that we were an Appalachian band with electric guitars and harmonicas and playing blues music. So she asked me to go out there and educate the audience on why a bunch of hillbillies were playing electric guitars.

"I felt at the time that she wanted me to be an apologist for not being a good hillbilly and not playing the banjo or something. So I went out there and told them that I'd been asked to explain the electric instruments. I held my guitar up, and I said, 'I took this one away from the first VISTA worker who came into Eastern Kentucky to help me.' It got a big laugh.

"I think people expect hillbillies to sort of keep their place, the way they expect black people to keep their place. If you offer anything outside of their expectations, they're uncomfortable with it." The band finds ready acceptance in the mountains, despite the electric guitars. "That's our big tour base, the Appalachian chain. People there just like the music. They relate to it as electric hillbilly blues: kind of country, kind of rock 'n' roll, kind of blues — just the music they like."

"Sometimes I feel like I don't so much write songs as find them. Sometimes it starts with a little guitar riff that happens when you're just doodling. Sometimes it's just nonsense words that you throw in there just to keep it going. Sometimes you have a title and all you gotta do is fill in the rest of the song."

Screenwriting

The band tours and records less often as the members have turned to other endeavors. Rodney Hatfield, under the pseudonym Art Snake, is a prolific painter. Frank Schaap has been playing music in New Orleans and in Germany. Stump has published a book of poetry, *The Land of One-Armed Men,* and has turned to screenwriting. He adapted *Saving Grace* by Lee Smith for the screen. Stump's admiration for Smith's work made the task daunting. "It was sort of like being told, 'Go up there and paint the

Sistine Chapel. What color do you think would look good?' And I ended up changing it. But she was really nice. She liked what I did with it."

Richard Pierce, director of the 1990 film *The Long Walk Home* starring Sissy Spacek and Whoopi Goldberg, read the Lee Smith adaptation and called Stump to ask him to write a script about the 1966 NCAA college basketball tournament in which the University of Kentucky lost to Texas Western University. "It was the first time an all-white Southern basketball power had been beaten by a mostly black team. It didn't make a big civil rights splash at the time, but when we look back 30 years later, we can see that the Southeastern Conference began recruiting black players the following year. It's referred to now as the Brown vs. Board of Education of college basketball."

Warner Brothers bought the script. Stump drove to Los Angeles, listening to the complete works of Hank Williams, a gift from his third wife, Bonnie McCafferty. "I stayed at this place called Oakwood, your standard American apartment complex. It had its own company store where you could buy anything from champagne and Brie to household items. It was perched above Warner Brothers Studio. I could see people down there rushing around with briefcases. I felt like I was living in a Warner Brothers slave ship. People were down there in the bowels going like this [*he makes rowing motions*]. They work harder than people anywhere I've ever been. I don't know if I want to work that hard."

> *"I think people expect hillbillies to sort of keep their place, the way they expect black people to keep their place. If you offer anything outside of their expectations, they're uncomfortable with it."*

Loving It But Leaving Anyway

But work he does. He is now rewriting a script called *Kentucky Blue,* originally written by Frederick Baylor, for the Louisville, Ky.-based production company Kentucky Films. "It's about a family that's in crisis. The father has resorted to growing dope after failing in the coal truck business, and he's trying to save his farm — plus it's a shoot-em-up at the end."

His wife, to whom he was introduced by Hatfield, is a regular columnist for *Louisville* magazine. "She's the best writer in our house." They don't critique one another's work. "I don't want her to be brutally honest. I know how good it is. I just want her to like it and think I'm smart and funny. And I think that's what she wants out of me." He likes living with a writer. "A writer understands that you need to be left alone," he says, "and that when somebody goes off to write, it doesn't mean anything about the marriage. I've been blessed."

He also likes living in Central Kentucky. "You know, I love Eastern Kentucky, but I can't live there anymore. There are not enough places to play music and make a living at it in Eastern Kentucky. There were certain kinds of personal connections that I couldn't make there. I had to come all the way to the city to find someone like Rodney Hatfield. We grew up about 70 miles from each other as the crow flies, but we both had to come to Lexington to find our own kind. Eastern Kentucky's my home, a lot of my friends are there, people I talk to on the phone all the time, but …"

The interview over, Nick Stump leaves to go back to working on his house. "I told my daughter, 'I used to paint houses so I could afford to play music at night. Then I started making money at music, enough to live on, and that afforded me the opportunity to have days to write. And now I'm writing and not really playing as much music, and it's afforded me the opportunity to paint the house.'"

He chuckles and ambles down Tyler Parkway, which slopes down toward the park. It's a gentle slope. You wouldn't call it a hill — and that's fine by him. N&T

A frequent contributor to Now & Then, *Laurene Scalf lives and writes in Louisville, Ky., where she takes advantage of every opportunity to see the Metropolitan Blues All-Stars perform.*

Revival

All day the children
sweat, twist for
a glimpse of graves
beyond the pulpit,
the man who offers
them to God.

Tired of shouting,
no air and flies,
they slip at last
between dusty flaps,
run to the first
broken stones.

Tight coats still
bind them, but their
hands are free,
search the tall weeds
for a flashing tail.

Green with yellow
stomachs, heads smaller
than a dime,
the lizards vanish
in each careful fist.

Held up in the gold
evening light,
their tongues flicker out,
tails thrash
in the moist dark
of a gentle palm.

And the children
rub the yellow skin,
calm the lizards
until their dark eyes
glaze, almost close.

Huddled together,
safe from sin,
they kneel with
something older than
this hill of graves,
voices that rock the air.

— William Miller

William Miller is associate professor of literature and creative writing at York College of Pennsylvania. His poems have appeared in over 100 journals. Three collections of his poetry have been published: The Trees are Mended *(Northwood Press),* Old Faith *(Mellen Press), and* Breathed on Glass *(Druid). His work is included in* Alabama Poets: A Contemporary Anthology. *Miller has also published 11 books for children.*

Callie

Irene B. Howie

A granddaughter struggles to let go of her beloved Cherokee grandmother.

I watch Callie sleep. In the soft glow of the dimly lit hospital room, she resembles an Indian princess. Her thick hair lies in two long braids on either side of her strong face. The once cinnamon brown skin is pale from too many days inside. Thin and frail, she lies there in her narrow white bed, her beautiful Cherokee cheekbones, which I had always envied, now protrude around her sunken, yellowed eyes with a telling prominence. Callie is dying.

Cards line the wall behind her bed. There are twenty-eight of them, all from her twenty-eight grandchildren. My card is among them. All of our lives, since the day each of us was born, Callie sent a card in recognition of the celebration of our birth. Every year, she remembered each one without fail. Her memory was remarkable. Each card was accompanied by a crisp new five dollar bill she had obtained at a local bank. This was the first year we had not received one of those cards. Reaching out, I stroke her hair gently, waiting, hoping she will respond, knowing she will not.

My insides tremble as I remember the week before. How I had cried out to the God Callie knew and loved so well and about whom she had taught me. I begged for mercy, that she be allowed to live, only to hear Callie's thin voice, filled with undeniable resolve, beseeching me, "Please, don't pray for me to stay. I'm so tired. I just want to go home." I was amazed at the strength in Callie's voice, stricken by the finality. If only I could get to that place …

At the age of twenty-four, I face the biggest crisis, the greatest challenge of my life, and this is the one time, the only time Callie cannot help me. The irony seems almost laughable. My body, my heart ache. I lie down on the floor beside her bed. It feels like death, cold and hard beneath me. Turning on my side, I look hard at the light shining from the sterile bathroom. Will Callie see a light when the time comes? How can I survive such a loss? How can I ever live without her?

Suddenly like thunder, a voice deep within me roars, "How can you be so selfish? Callie is the one who is suffering, dying — and all you can think of is yourself?" Shriveling from the guilt, I am disgusted by my own weakness in the face of Callie's incredible strength, disgusted by how little the others in the family knew her.

Courtesy of Irene B. Howie

A woman of strong faith, Callie (in the mid-1970s) was always there for her granddaughter.

As a child, I had listened — after Callie had gone to bed or had left the room for a moment — to the whispered words of concern.

"She's too serious about this religion stuff."

"She gives too much money to those damn holy rollers."

"She's too nice to people. They take advantage of her."

They viewed her convictions as something that weakened her and made her vulnerable. I found it humorous that they, considering themselves stronger than she, only dared speak of her in her absence. Callie would never have done that. You always knew where you stood with her. A woman of few words, when she did speak, she usually had something profound, at the very least, to say.

She sat quietly in the pew of her favorite church and never spoke, Sunday after Sunday, except to greet neighbors and friends before and after the services and to participate in the usual hymn singing. But one Sunday, she was moved to speak.

As she entered the church, she noticed three large wooden boxes near the front where the preacher stood. This was not the usual preacher, but a guest. At the opening of the service, he stood and addressed the congregation. "Anyone in here who doesn't have enough faith to handle the snakes, please leave the service now so you won't hinder the faith of those of us who do believe."

Courtesy of Irene B. Howie

This portrait of two-year-old twins Harold Dene (l), the author's father, and Herkus Gene (r) was taken just prior to the onset of Callie's life-threatening illness when she was a young woman.

Callie stood calmly, looked directly at the tall man in the black suit and in a no-nonsense, matter-of-fact voice said, "Sir, there is a fine line between faith and presumption. The Bible says we should not test God, and that's exactly what you're doin'." Amid gasps and whispers of disdain and disapproval, she quietly left, never to return to that particular church again. But she remained undaunted in her convictions.

And with good reason: For when I was a child, she told me the story of the "miracle" she had experienced. I remember that story now as I stand at the bottom of Callie's hospital bed. When she was a young woman of thirty-two with six children, my father Harold one of them, she became deathly ill. Vomiting blood, unable to eat, she was informed by the doctors that she had a malignant stomach tumor and would not survive the rest of the year. Callie told me of how she had prayed, asking God to reconsider and to allow her to remain on this earth long enough to raise her children.

A couple of months after the doctor's diagnosis, Callie had summoned the family to her bedside and announced simply, "God told me if I'd go to the church and let the church family lay hands on me, I'd be healed. So I'm going'."

The ticking of the old mantle clock was deafening in the silence that followed Callie's incredible pronouncement. Finally, Grandpa Alvin, who had already had his early morning "hot toddies," struggled off the settee, swaying, his red eyes bulging, mouth gaping. "To church?" his voice squeaked. "This morning?" Callie's three-year-old twins, Herkus and Harold, glanced at each other snickering as their father reached for the nightstand in hopes of steadying himself. My Uncle Charles rolled his eyes and shook his head. Callie's sister, my Great Aunt Ollie, stood wild-eyed, wringing her hands. My Aunt Geraldine moved closer to the bed and patted her mother's hand patronizingly and said gently, "Now Mommy, that would be fine except you just can't make it. You know you can't even get up offa this bed, let alone walk to the church." Everyone nodded in agreement.

"I ain't aimin' to walk, Geraldine," Callie said flatly. "I'm goin', and I figured you-all are gonna carry me." Again, an excruciating silence permeated the bedroom, and desperate faces scanned other equally desperate faces in hopes of finding one face brave enough to venture another argument against Callie's plan. No one wanted to be the traitor. Callie's opinion had always been respected. She was regarded, not only by the family but also by the entire community, as a woman of wisdom. Her counsel, given only when requested, had been well-received by all of them most of their lives. Now, with her lying on her deathbed, they were unwilling to come against her wishes, no matter how bizarre. Uncle Lloyd came to his feet. He spoke pointedly as he addressed the group.

"Mommy," he began, "if God spoke to you, then who are we to argue with Him? We'll take you." He threw his shoulders back. "Geraldine!" he commanded his sister. "Get her ready." Then, with his chest stuck out in defiance of the rest, he led the group in a mass exodus. Callie could hear the shouts of protest as they stomped down the stairs to the kitchen.

In the kitchen, assuming that Callie had become deranged from the illness and realizing it would probably be her last wish, the group finally agreed to honor her inconvenient request. Great Aunt Ollie and Aunt Geraldine made her ready, and all of them gathered around the bed, trying to decide the best way to carry her. She had broken several ribs from the violent coughing that plagued her. After much debate, my uncles Lloyd and Charles slid their arms under Callie's back, Uncle Verlin and Grandpa slid their arms under her legs, and they all lifted her up.

No sooner had her tiny body left the mattress when she began crying out for them to let her go. They quickly returned her to the mattress and stood back in horror, trying to determine if

When I was a child, she told me the story of the "miracle" she had experienced. I remember that story now as I stand at the bottom of Callie's hospital bed.

they had injured her somehow. When she finally caught her breath and told them she was all right, Uncle Lloyd decided it would be best if he just "scooped" her up in his arms. It seemed fitting that Uncle Lloyd would be the one to make a dramatic attempt, scooping her up, sweeping her away like a knight in one of those fairy tales, taking her away to a place where all her problems would disappear. He was, after all, the oldest at 16 and the one whom everyone counted on and looked up to, earning him the unspoken title of "family hero." But while Uncle Lloyd was "scooping," Callie was screaming so the rescue was short-lived. After these failed attempts to carry her without hurting her, there was a lot of deliberating and speculating. Callie listened as long as she could, then calmly gave her instructions.

An excruciating silence permeated the bedroom, and desperate faces scanned other equally desperate faces in hopes of finding one face brave enough to venture another argument against Callie's plan.

"Don't touch me! Just pick up this mattress and carry me! I've got to get to the church before the service is over." They all looked at one another and then at Uncle Lloyd, who nodded his assent. The twins Herkus and Harold squealed with delight as they watched the process begin from the hall. The room filled with grunts and heavy breathing as they lifted the mattress off the bed and moved it toward the door. The double-bed mattress would not fit through the narrow doorway. "We'll need to curl up the sides around Mommy to get her through there," Uncle Charles said in a cynical, discouraging tone.

"Then roll her up," Uncle Lloyd said emphatically. "Hang on, Mommy." Callie lay still and began praying softly. Grandpa Alvin's red face faded to purple, and he groaned as the springs in the mattress resisted being curled around her. I always imagined she must have looked like one of those "pigs in a blanket" they serve in cafeterias. After a lot of heaving and groaning, they finally made it through the door, into the hall, and over to the stairway.

"Roll her up again," Uncle Lloyd ordered, realizing the stairway was narrow and very steep. Aunt Geraldine and Great Aunt Ollie stood back, holding their breath, wringing their hands. The twins ran back and forth across the kitchen, ecstatic from the excitement, giggling and cheering them on. Grandpa was a little green around the gills, what with all the excitement and all those "toddies" sloshing around in his head. He gave a sudden jolt as he lost his footing in the middle of the stairway. There was a chorus of "Oh my Gods," one "goddamnit," then "Thank Gods" as they quickly steadied the mattress and avoided disaster. Callie told Grandpa to "mind his mouth." The twins cheered in triumph. Callie began praying louder.

They made it to the kitchen and rolled her up again and managed to get out the front door into the street that led to the church. Grandpa and my uncles Lloyd, Charles, and Verlin carried Callie slowly down that road, followed by Great Aunt Ollie, Aunt Geraldine, the twins, and — barking all the while — the dog. Other dogs soon joined the parade, fighting with one another, yelping in a frenzy of excitement. Great Aunt Ollie yelled at them continuously, trying to shoo them away so they wouldn't trip the ones carrying the precious cargo.

What a sight. I imagine Callie looked like Cleopatra perched up on that mattress, being carried through the streets of the sleepy coal camp community of Blue Diamond in Perry County, Kentucky. In all the commotion, people began appearing in doorways to watch the curious spectacle. Other men joined to help carry Callie, and Grandpa was glad for that. He let go of the mattress completely so he could wipe the sweat off his purple face. Other children followed, with the twins dancing around the mattress. Without ever even realizing it, that unlikely group went down in history that day. This was the first and only parade the community had ever had, and consequently, it was talked about for years.

By the time they reached the church, it had become quite a menagerie. They didn't have to roll her up again to get through the door for these were double doors. Uncle Lloyd opened them, and Callie looked up at the parade around and behind her and said, "Why don't you-all come into the church with me? God's gonna heal me today." No one did except for Uncle Lloyd, Aunt Geraldine, and Great Aunt Ollie. The rest stayed outside, pondering Callie's "message from God," laughing and talking about the perils of such a journey, whispering doubts that there would be a healing and commenting, "How sad. She's only thirty-two."

I smile as I remember how Callie said that on that day when she went home, she began to grow stronger and better each successive day, until finally she recovered completely. How she laughed each Christmas for years when she received cards from those doctors asking if she were still living. And now, she was seventy years old.

The door opens, and I hear footsteps — precise, relentless. They approach the bed. A light comes on, and a nurse lifts Callie's tiny wrist to check her pulse, then her blood pressure. "She won't survive the night," the nurse reports impassively. I

The coma has made her once radiant face a solemn mask of dull indifference.

follow the steps until the door closes. Standing, I lean close to Callie's face, stroking her cheek. It is cold. Vainly, I pull the blanket closer to her chin. The coma has made her once radiant face a solemn mask of dull indifference. I follow the tube hanging down the side of her bed. It is filled with an amber colored fluid, and I remember the day we laughed hardest together. I was fourteen.

Grandpa Alvin, who was extremely fond of bourbon, was not allowed to drink in Callie's house. This was strictly forbidden. One day, she took me by the hand, covered my mouth with her other hand, and we sneaked down the hall to the kitchen. She reached into the old tin breadbox on top of the pie

Courtesy of Irene B. Howie

Three-year-old Irene Howie (the author) walks with her Grandpa Alvin.

safe and pulled out a pint bottle of Four Roses whiskey. Grinning mischievously, she emptied the contents into the sink. I erupted into giggles as she replaced the "fire water," as Alvin called it, with apple cider vinegar. She screwed the lid on tightly

> *In a few moments, Alvin stepped cautiously into the kitchen. We peeked around the doorway just as he reached into the breadbox. He paused for a moment, listening, and then began guzzling the liquid as fast and hard as he could.*

and held it up to the light. It glowed a warm amber, just like the Four Roses. She put it back into the breadbox, and we went into the hall and waited.

In a few moments, Alvin stepped cautiously into the kitchen. We peeked around the doorway just as he reached into the breadbox. He paused for a moment, listening, and then began guzzling the liquid as fast and hard as he could. Suddenly, he began choking, coughing, spewing all over the kitchen, his face turned a deep crimson in shock, then rage as we laughed and shrieked in victory at our prank. Soon he couldn't contain the laughter himself, and we all laughed until we couldn't any more.

I turn out the light and lay back down on the floor. I shift my body around, trying to get comfortable, but there was no comfort. I lie on my back, and the words, "I'm so tired. I want to go home" will not stop haunting me. My face flushes. She had always taken care of me. How can she go? Her tenacity in the past years has been invincible. Why won't she draw on it now? How can she leave me? How can the God she has loved and believed in for so long abandon her now?

My head spins as I lie exhausted, semiconscious. I wait anxiously for each sound of Callie's uneven, shallow wheezing. I must not sleep ... I resist, but sleep comes. I cannot stop it. N&T

Irene B. Howie has written poems and songs all of her life. It was only after she enrolled as an adult student in a creative writing course at Pikeville College in Pikeville, Ky., and received the encouragement of her teacher, James Riley, that she considered submitting her work for publication. A 42-year-old mother of three sons, Howie has recently completed her bachelor of arts in psychology and human services and is planning to go on to graduate school. She is married to John Howie, who teaches psychology at Pikeville College.

Aunt Emmy, Little Jenny

They, too, must have watched us,
shyly, from a distance: small-boned
old Dutch women, bunned hair
tightened shiny. Almost painful the love
brushed through a field of neck hairs,
their light hands touching us
as they passed—setting long tables,
cradling wet-bottomed shoofly,
Easters at Uncle Milt's pond.
Aproned unmarried relatives,
Wie bisht, John? they would whisper,
calling us by other, older names
in a low German dying through three
centuries, gone now on Hawk Mountain.
In some old Indian religions,
our elders return as wild things,
and they mind our homes while we sleep,
cropping rhododendron from gardens,
nipping the earliest rosebuds. We find
the perfect hoofprints, smaller than
our palms, punched through melting snow.
Those whitetail doe in the street
tonight, who's to say it isn't
Emmy and Jenny, pausing then
wheeling in our parking lights' glow,
halt and spooky and beautiful?
Who's to say that animals sometimes
wouldn't like to touch *us,* too?

—David Staudt

David Staudt grew up in the rural Blue Mountain region of Northeastern Pennsylvania (Carbon County). After eight years as a Navy officer, he returned to school at Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y., where he received a master of fine arts in writing in 1993. Staudt has taught creative writing at Cornell and at Susquehanna University in Selinsgrove, Pa., and has had poems and stories published in such literary magazines as River Oak Review, Laurel Review, *and* New Zoo Poetry Review. *He is presently studying law at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville.*

Lee Smith, Annie Dillard, and the Hollins Group: A Genesis of Writers

by Nancy Parrish

Louisiana State University Press
Baton Rouge, La. - 1998
$29.95 (hardcover)

The only thing more remarkable than the fact that Lee Smith and Annie Dillard were Hollins College classmates is that they weren't the only distinguished English majors among the class of 1967. Southern literature scholars Lucinda Hardwick MacKethan, author of the 1990 volume *Daughters of Time,* and Anne Goodwyn Jones, who produced *Tomorrow Is Another Day* in 1981, are also alumnae of the very same class.

How did these four women wind up in the same class at a small institution in the Appalachian foothills? How did Hollins create a writing program that attracted such talented young women and launched their notable careers? In *Lee Smith, Annie Dillard, and the Hollins Group,* Nancy Parrish explores these questions and provides an intriguing analysis of Smith's and Dillard's undergraduate writing.

Initially planning an in-depth study of Smith's work, Parrish was struck by the Grundy, Va., native's strong sense of indebtedness to her Hollins professors and classmates. So Parrish, an English teacher in the Chesterfield (Va.) County public school system, postponed her Smith book. She began instead "a cultural study of the creation of one particular writing community that has been exceptionally effective in nurturing women writers into successful publication."

Hollins University

Lee Smith poses in her yearbook picture from Hollins College.

Parrish begins with an overview of higher education for women in the South before 1960. In "Southern Stepsisters," Parrish explores what she terms the central paradox of Hollins' success: that the institution was founded in a gentle paternalistic social climate with the goal of making young women more marriageable, but its graduates, fueled by their intellectual and creative discoveries, ultimately upended that very same patriarchal culture. The group's motto, "Anarchy and Arrogance Forever," illustrates just how far removed from a finishing-school atmosphere they were.

Parrish devotes a chapter to Louis Rubin Jr., hired in 1957 to make the writing program nationally competitive. Among his accomplishments at Hollins were the establishment of *The Hollins Critic* and the campus chapter of Phi Beta Kappa. Rubin also pressed for a writer-in-residence program and invited then little-known British writer William Golding, whose *Lord of the Flies* had just received U.S. paperback publication. When sales of Golding's novel skyrocketed, Hollins' name surfaced in national publications such as *The New York Times Book Review.* Soon, students like Lee Smith and Annie Dillard were knocking at the front gates.

The year 1963 was particularly pivotal. Writing students heard Flannery O'Connor, Karl Shapiro, Eudora Welty, Robert Penn Warren, Andrew Lytle, Peter Taylor, Richard Wilbur, George Garrett, and Howard Nemerov. More importantly, 26-year-old poet Richard H. W. Dillard, who later succeeded Rubin as the program's paterfamilias, joined the faculty.

Lee Smith's work at Hollins is the subject of Parrish's best chapter. *The Last Day the Dogbushes Bloomed,* Smith's first novel published in 1968, is under-

Hollins University

Annie Dillard strolls through the campus at Hollins College.

rated, and it is nice to see that book done critical justice. If Parrish's competence with Smith's fiction is any indication, we can all hope she has returned to the full-length study she originally planned.

The chapter on Annie Dillard is denser, more difficult because Dillard's work is more meditative and philosophical. Dillard's undergraduate preoccupation with Thoreau is particularly informative to a reading of her 1975 Pulitzer Prize winner, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek.*

Parrish's book is seasoned with amusing anecdotes: Smith, Dillard, and their cohorts spend 11 days on a Mississippi River raft simulating Huck Finn's fictional journey; Smith is expelled for a semester after missing curfew during her Paris Abroad trip; and Smith, Dillard, and classmates perform in go-go boots and miniskirts during a reading attended by Henry Taylor, Leslie Fiedler, Fred Chappell, George Garrett, and Shelby Foote. Great photos, many of them from the campus yearbook, *The Spinster,* accompany these stories.

It seems safe to wager that no institution has seen a class quite like the Hollins Group. Their literary talents matched

their passion, and both congeniality and competition characterized their undergraduate experience. In their subsequent careers, Parrish writes, Smith, Dillard, MacKethan, and Jones have continued to depend on one another intellectually, a phenomenon which Parrish, borrowing the name of the mountain which shadows the Hollins campus, has termed "the Tinker diaspora." "[B]y their own judgment," Parrish writes, "their association with each other at Hollins was the most significant influence on their progress as writers."

Nancy Parrish's book will appeal to readers interested in Appalachian and Southern literature, the history of women's education, creative writing programs, or women's changing social roles. Teachers should read especially closely, as this book speaks volumes about how creativity is nurtured.

It's hard to believe someone didn't write it sooner.

—Lana Whited

A 1983 alumna of the Hollins creative writing program, Lana Whited currently teaches English and journalism at Ferrum College. In April 1998, she coordinated the Virginia Humanities Conference's annual meeting at Ferrum, with "The Life and Legacy of Appalachia" as its theme.

Another Country: Journeying Toward the Cherokee Mountains
by Christopher Camuto
Henry Holt & Co.
New York - 1997
$25.00 (hardcover)

An ardent hiker, woodsman, and ethnologist, Christopher Camuto has been coming down from his home in Buena Vista, Va., to the Western North Carolina mountains for many years. His new book, *Another Country: Journeying Toward the Cherokee Mountains,* is a must-read for anyone even remotely interested in the Highlands of Western North Carolina.

Another Country is at once a study of the red wolf restoration project, of Cherokee myth and language, and of the ecobotany of the Southern Appalachian region. Camuto writes like Philadelphia botanist William Bartram, librarian-turned-writer Horace Kephart, and philosopher and poet Henry David Thoreau all rolled into one. In fact — and I'm going to say this right up front — this may well be one of the best books ever written about the Southern Blue Ridge. No one and no work, until now, has truly laid claim to the Smoky Mountains National Park and its surrounding wilderness areas as Camuto has. It is a book that illuminates its subject.

Camuto employs a knowledgeable, engaging first person point of view to blend together the various strands of his narrative. His poetic literary style had me daydreaming while paging through the dictionary for words like *parallax, lithic, claxing,* and *plosive.* But we should not be intimidated by Camuto's vocabulary, as his journal entry style is as reassuring as Thoreau's and every bit as inviting.

For instance, Camuto's description of tracking newly released red wolves with electronic receivers near Cades Cove and the Tuckaseegee River Basin of Swain County is some of the best published work on red wolf reintroduction to date. Here he makes drama out of the seeming drudgery of fieldwork and creates cinematography from what could easily have been pallid prose. Tracking these wolves puts the poet in him in mind of his days as a fly fisher: "Now I was fishing for the river itself, casting for a wild, wolfish spirit in these relentless cascades, something stream-born trout once shared with forest-born wolves, a force freeform as whitewater, edgy as quartz."

Aside from his engaging passages about the red wolf, Camuto's early chapter tracing the course of DeSoto's march through the Carolinas and the Cherokee Mountains is the best historical account of that campaign I have ever read. Camuto's account of this barbarous quest for gold and riches by the misplaced Spaniards gives us a raven's eye view of the follies and futilities of DeSoto's ruinous romp through the wilderness of the Southeast.

I have lived here in the "Cherokee" Mountains for three-fifths of my life. Despite being intimate with this place, I learned something new with the turn of almost every page in Camuto's book. It is that rich, that inclusive, that profound. And I will be more than taken aback if this book does not go down as one of the essential, if not the definitive, studies of these southernmost Appalachian hills in the years and generations to come.

—Thomas Rain Crowe

Editor-at-large for the Asheville Poetry Review, *Thomas Rain Crowe is a poet and translator who makes his home in the Smoky Mountains of North Carolina. His latest books include* The Laugharne Poems *and* In Wineseller's Street, *both published in 1998.*

A Room Forever: The Life, Work, and Letters of Breece D'J Pancake
by Thomas E. Douglass
University of Tennessee Press
Knoxville, Tenn. – 1998
$32.00 (hardcover)

Pulitzer prize-nominated West Virginia fiction writer Breece D'J Pancake lived but a short time. He died in 1979, just shy of his 27th birthday, from a self-inflicted gunshot wound. His slim literary output parallels the brevity of his years on earth: *The Stories of Breece D'J Pancake,* a single posthumous volume of 12 stories published in 1983.

In *A Room Forever: The Life, Work, and Letters of Breece D'J Pancake,* Thomas E. Douglass attempts to assess Pancake's work and legacy and to expose the intimate connections between a writer and his lived experience, his place, and his art. In particular, he attempts to sort out the "myth" of Breece Pancake from the complex reality of the young man's life and to examine the work for what it is. It is a myth that forever casts him as the tortured young artist who tragically died on the brink of a promising career.

Douglass is most successful when he displays his keen understanding of Pancake's artistry and its influences. Perhaps best known in Appalachia for his in-depth, insightful interviews with a number of the region's most important contemporary writers, he is particularly adept at demonstrating the powerful effect of

West Virginia's — and Appalachia's — history and culture on the writer's imagination. He reveals, for example, the thematic and stylistic impact on Pancake of Depression-era West Virginia proletarian writer Tom Kromer. Douglass also displays an impressive knowledge of Southern, American, and world literature and is thus able to place Pancake's work in a broad, rich cultural tradition. At the same time, Douglass also gets at the mythic and archetypal layers beneath the finely chiseled surface realism of Pancake's fiction. These layers ensure that this West Virginian's work transcends any limiting "regional" label.

Douglass makes it clear that Pancake was genuinely interested in trying to push Appalachian literature toward thematic and topical concerns as well as stylistic forms it had yet to explore. In his letters, for example, Pancake constantly expresses his desire *not* to write "like John-Boy Walton — soft soap," and he also notes, more than once, his "over-abundance of strange themes."

The scholar expertly captures the essence of Pancake's innovative accomplishments when he writes: "The newness of Pancake's fiction lay in his ability to capture ... the mind of the Appalachian of the 1960s and 1970s — the frustration of dysfunctional families in a place where, historically, family has been all that matters, the geographic and economic isolation, the conflicts of desire imposed by the suburbanization of the mountains, the desire of wanting more than the past or the region could offer yet wanting to hold onto things of traditional value, and the resulting generational turmoil."

In addition, Douglass offers some insightful commentary about the usual perception of Appalachian writers and their work. He notes, for example, the stubborn tendency of most critics and reviewers from outside the region to read all Appalachian fiction or poetry as sociological tracts, as representations of social, cultural, and historical "reality." Most critics (and many readers) fail to recognize that the Appalachia of its literary artists is not literal reality but rather a world created by individual imaginations. As Douglass rightfully argues, this refusal to recognize this distinction has done much to perpetuate the marginalization of the region and its people.

Despite Douglass' many and considerable successes, his book is not without flaws. The most obvious is the constant repetition of quotes, facts, and statements. He cites some quotations, in whole or in part, three times or more. By the time the reader has learned for the seventh or eighth time that Pancake used a 1920 No. 5 Underwood typewriter given to him by his Aunt Julia, he or she is ready to throw in the towel.

A more serious problem is that in attempting to demythologize Pancake, Douglass only — if unintentionally — adds to the image of the writer as an intensely brooding, lonely, melancholy, self-exiled Romantic who through his art attempts to mend his wounded soul. But perhaps this is inevitable. Ironically, the mere act of discussing these ideas about Pancake cements them in the minds of many readers, especially those coming to the author's work for the first time.

In the end, though, the many strengths of Douglass' account of Breece D'J Pancake's life and work far outweigh such minor annoyances, and the reader is thankful that the author has made available such a fascinating, in-depth, and richly researched treatment of Pancake, his art, and his times.

— Stephen D. Mooney

Stephen D. Mooney — from Dickenson County, Va., in the heart of the Central Appalachian coalfields — hopes to explore every hill and holler in the region before he dies.

Appalachian Mountain Girl

By Rhoda Bailey Warren

Academy Chicago Publishers
Chicago - 1998
$22.50 (hardcover)

In the preface to her touching, often humorous collection of autobiographical sketches, *Appalachian Mountain Girl,* Kentucky native Rhoda Bailey Warren establishes that she intends not only to acknowledge but also to celebrate memory's tendency to burnish the past. "From a distance," she writes, "the sharp, jagged cliffs were softened, the wind blowing over the frozen ground was no longer cold and the once meager table was now more than ample." She refracts her recollections of growing up in Letcher, Ky., through the passage of time: they reflect the wisdom of age, experience, and loss. At their weakest, her essays lapse into sentimentalism. At their very best, they resurrect with a tender and appropriate reverence the people and places of long ago.

The collection of 15 anecdotes begins with a sketch called "Corbin Glow," which chronicles the 1930 exodus of Warren's family from the cramped, hot mining town of the essay's title to the lush greenness of rural Letcher with its strong sense of community. With fitting symmetry, "Leaving Home," the last tale, recounts the family's outmigration in the face of mine closures: They leave Kentucky to join family in Wyoming, N.Y., where, after a temporary return to Letcher, the Baileys finally settle for good. In Wyoming, Rhoda Bailey marries and eventually becomes a newspaper reporter/editor and the town mayor. As is often the case, it is Warren's separation from her extended family and the finality of her break with Kentucky that serves as the impetus for her renewed appreciation of her Appalachian home.

A few of the sketches sandwiched between these two removals suffer from a variety of ailments. "Going to School" begins well as Warren remembers with humor and wistfulness her first days at Letcher's Stuart Robinson School, but the middle is marred by a rather stilted account of the institution's founding that reads too much like a newspaper article. Likewise, "Kin" — the story of a neighborhood ploughman-singer — strives too hard to compare its title character to the medieval poet Caedmon. Ultimately, this piece shows how easily Warren can lapse into sentimentalism. And stylistically, Warren's prose occasionally suffers from an overreliance on clichés. The Corbin mine, for example, is a "gaping maw ... its dank cold breathing of the grave."

However, most of Warren's stories rise above such occasional stylistic lapses. Her language is often graced by the

continued on page 47

Rocket Boys: A Very Personal Appreciation

Rocket Boys: A Memoir
By Homer H. Hickam Jr.
Delacorte Press
New York - 1998
$23.95 (hardcover)
paperback edition published as
October Sky: A Memoir
Dell Books
New York - 1999
$6.99 (paperback)

I learned about *Rocket Boys* by chance, a mystical gift really.

I was attending the National Storytelling Association festival in Jonesborough, Tenn., when I struck up a conversation with a couple from Tazewell, Va., sitting behind a friend and myself. Eventually, I discovered that the husband, Bill Deskins, had grown up in the small West Virginia town of Berwind, the very same coal mining camp where my grandmother had lived. I asked him if he had known my father, Arthur Dye. "Yes," he answered promptly, "I knew your father. I graduated from Big Creek High School with your father."

My father died while in the service when he was only 22 years old. I was born after his death. And so it was an amazing and unexpected gift to meet a man who actually knew my father, who knew that my father had a moustache earlier than all the other boys in his class, and who remembered that my father was a "real good guy."

It was Deskins who told me about a movie coming out about four boys coming of age during the 1950s in the same coal mining area of Southeastern West Virginia where he and my father had grown up. In fact, the teacher in the movie, a Miss Frieda Riley, was in the same high school class as Deskins and my father.

So when I was browsing in a local bookstore a few weeks later, *Rocket Boys* caught my eye, and I was given yet another gift. When I picked up the book, I found my father on every page. This was his story, and I now know him better for having attended to it.

Courtesy of Darla Dye

Arthur Dye, the reviewer's father, came of age just a few years earlier than Sonny Hickam in the same part of West Virginia and faced many of the same decisions as he neared high school graduation.

Rocket Boys is the story of ambition, ingenuity, pride, and "smarts" as four young men earn their place in the Space Age of the late 1950s. As Deskins recounted to me that night, "Boys had three choices at that time and place: to go into the coal mines, to go into the Army, or to go to college." My father chose the Army. Sonny Hickam went to college, then to the armed forces, and finally to a position with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). The decision to go to college instead of going into the mines was difficult for Hickam since his father was a "company man," the mine superintendent who made a good living and expected his son to follow in his footsteps.

But the younger Hickam's destiny rose heavenward with the launching of the Soviet Sputnik I in 1957. His dream — a completely farfetched dream in his father's eyes — was to work for German scientist Wernher von Braun in the race to pull ahead of Russia in space exploration. With help from Quentin, the class nerd, Hickam designed rockets from scratch. Without the Internet and its instructions, with very little money, and with few written sources, they made their own rocket fuel, caps, fins, nozzles, and cylinders. The community cheered Hickam on, from his first "bomb" to his journey to the National Science Fair in Indianapolis, Ind., where he won first place.

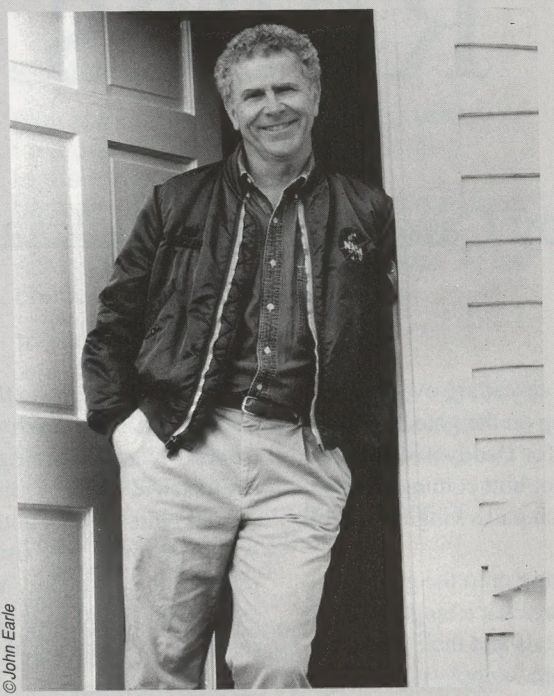
I found myself wondering whether my father was as strongly supported when he boarded the bus on his way to a new life, to boot camp and the Army's 101st Airborne division and away from coal mines and black lung. My grandfather was also a coal miner, and like Hickam's father, he eventually died from complications of black lung disease. This was a life sought by many in the Dye family and a life in which they took great pride. Working in the mines was the only good-paying work in the area. It took knowledge of the coal veins and skill, especially as the work became more and more technological. But this work also exacted a price: black lung disease, quite obviously, but also back problems and the eventual financial hardship.

Hickam realized where his future lay. He saw the changes in his own and neighboring towns. He saw the decline

in the workforce and had a front row seat when mines closed. He knew it was time for a change, whether the community was prepared or not. And so he worked against his family's and his community's norms and expectations and forged his own path despite sometimes vacillating support. He overcame the odds and left West Virginia at some personal cost, especially in terms of his relationship to his own father.

Nevertheless, this is a story of hope as one boy realizes his dream and leaves the coal mines of West Virginia, carrying with him the strength of this place and its people.

My own father didn't make rockets as Homer "Sonny" Hickam Jr. and his buddies did, but he dreamed as they dreamed. What I found in Hickam's memoir was not just his West Virginia, I found Arthur Dye's West Virginia: the slag heaps Hickam described, the mining shafts, the company store where people gathered, the halls of Big Creek High School, the tough-as-nails principal. I looked in each of the faces of Coalwood, W.Va., and I found my father in all of them. I thank Hickam for this gift to all of us.



©John Earle

Homer Hickam Jr.'s choices led him out of the coalfields of West Virginia and into NASA at the beginning of the race for space.

—Darla Dye

Darla Dye lives in Jonesborough, Tenn., with her teenaged son. While she has taught Appalachian Studies and English courses at several area colleges, she is currently sharpening her sociological skills by working with the U.S. Bureau of the Census. She is a James Still Fellow and has her master's degree in English from East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tenn. Dye travels through West Virginia's coal camps where she visits her father's family whom she met for the first time when she was 18.

continued from page 45

journalist's keen eye for detail. Certain scenes artfully—and sometimes painfully—echo each other. In "Going to School," for instance, Warren recounts with wry humor her youthful confusion when she is asked by her teacher—who speaks with a deep Southern accent—to spell what is to her the indecipherable "awgon." (It turns out that her teacher was quizzing her on the word *organ*.) Later, however, in "Leaving Home," dialectical differences become a painful reminder of the family's strangeness in a strange land when a New York storekeeper assumes her mother is from a foreign country.

One simple fact makes this book memorable: Although it serves as her autobiography, *Appalachian Mountain Girl* truly belongs to the people she remembers with such loving detail. In the best of her stories, she eschews the sentimentality and forced literary allusions that sometimes mar her work and instead focuses exclusively on the character sketch. In these sketches, her voice rings with authenticity.

Among the best is "Ithal," in which Warren reveals that the local bad girl—deemed a Jezebel by Warren's mother and known for her fondness for makeup, red silk pajamas, and *True Confessions* magazine—is actually a gentle and patient nurse to her hidden, invalid sister. Also notable is "Miss Rainey," in which a recluse engages the young Rhoda Bailey as her own personal daily news reporter, thereby unwittingly sparking the girl's future career. Finally, "That Man," perhaps the most "literary" of the stories in this collection, tells of a mysterious man who arrives in the community, becoming first the subject of gossip and then the object of the community's care and concern. "Cindy" and "Gideon" also stand out.

The weakest part of *Appalachian Mountain Girl* is the epilogue, which abandons the book's general scheme of character sketches and reminiscences for what amounts to heavy-handed polemics on environmental issues. That is not to say that Warren elsewhere ignores the forces that have altered the physical and emotional landscape of the Letcher conjured up by her memory. In the first two chapters, she contrasts a mine-free environment with one forever scarred. Later, she refers to the fight for unionization and, of course, she ends by bringing outmigration to the fore. But her best social criticisms are incorporated subtly into the fabric of her stories.

It is best, then, to skip the epilogue and enjoy *Appalachian Mountain Girl* for what it does best: reconstruct with vitality and beauty—and share in a good-hearted fashion—the most precious of memories.

—Jennifer Mullins Mooney

Jennifer Mooney recently received a doctorate in 19th century British literature from the University of Kentucky. She now resides in Blacksburg, Va., where she teaches at Virginia Tech. Last year, she helped develop the university's first online Appalachian Literature course and web project.

Roses

by Carol Guthrie Heilman

I see a white wooden gate, red roses cascading over a wire fence, and my sister and me standing on the gate barefoot. From our vantage point, we waited for Daddy's return home from the coal mines. We could spot him coming across the creek and up the hill, his silvery lunch pail swinging against his dark form.

To pass the time, we took turns jumping onto the gate, pushing off with one foot and riding it open against a tangle of roses. The fence shuddered, releasing loose petals and their fragrance into the air. We rode the gate closed again, completing the round trip, metal latch clanging.

The fence and gate have long since rotted or rusted away, along with the coal-mining community of C&C in Eastern Kentucky. After the mid-1950s, when the demand for coal plummeted, families packed their belongings and left company-owned houses in search of a job — or the rumors of one.

Several years ago, when I returned, the only remains I found were those of the tipple. Instead of rumbling and shaking, spewing coal from its long chute, it leaned ghostly quiet against the mountain. The wind, whispering through an abandoned apple orchard, touched a mound of briers and weeds where the commissary had stood as the hub of community life. In this whitewashed store with dark, oiled floors, managed by Mother with her no-nonsense efficiency, she sold everything from work boots to pickled pig's feet. Here the miners could request scrip — coal company money — and buy any item they desired if they ran short of cash. They paid for the use of that scrip out of their next paycheck, plus interest of course.

On Friday evenings, they would come to the commissary, purchase a cold RC, a fresh bologna sandwich, and enjoy a free ringside seat to a boxing match on the camp's only television, perched on the meat counter.

Our two-bedroom house had wormy chestnut walls, pine floors, a Warm Morning stove, and a full coal bucket in winter. We listened to Fats Domino sing "On Blueberry Hill," made peanut butter fudge, and hoped when our four-party line rang, it would be for us. My sister played her clarinet scales. I attempted the trombone. When summer storms flashed in the skies, Daddy and I sat in the porch swing to watch, Mother calling us to come inside at once.

When C&C shut down and we left our hillside home, we moved to an ugly apartment over one hundred miles away. We wrapped our good memories with care to enjoy years later, though we were not aware we did so at the time. We also cradled buckets of rich mountain soil and young rose slips from the red climber spilling over the fence. "They might not all make it," Daddy said to explain their quantity.

Months later, we moved to a house with a big backyard, and the rose bush had a chain-link fence to grace and soften. It prospered in that same spot for thirty years until Mother and Daddy moved to North Carolina, bringing new slips rooted from the old.

Now the rose bush grows up a white trellis. A couple of its young plants show promise near Daddy's toolshed. This fall, when they have strong root structure, he will plant them along the split rail fence of my nearby mountain home.

A rich color and fragrance of childhood has come full circle. N&T

Courtesy of Carol Guthrie Heilman

Edith and Charles Guthrie stand before the chain-link fence with the climbing rose transported from their coal camp residence.

Carol Guthrie Heilman spent her childhood in Eastern Kentucky, graduated from the University of Kentucky in Lexington, taught school, and raised a family. Now she helps seniors write their life stories where she lives in Columbia, S.C. She has written a young adult novel, "A Faraway Place," which is currently seeking a publisher.

Shelter

Fine red mist on the Smoky Mountains.
I eat oatmeal in the foothills, indebted
to the eaves of my small house
beneath which I read Sappho, scatter pecans
with bare, chilled toes, kicking shells
across the profusion of fallen leaves. At last
comfortable enough to be grateful

to two strangers, Hasidic Jews
who once invited me to live
with them, for free
my last month in Paris. From a distance
of three years, three thousand miles,
I thank them. Without ceremony,
with my small daughter for companion,
I left Europe. Leaving their
apartment, I saw rain
falling onto the cracked sidewalk,
fluorescent lights beneath green art
deco arches of the Metro
shining from below. And now I remember

one autumn in the Blue Ridge
when I was twenty-three, I slept
in a tent of fine mesh. Beside me
someone whose body was radiant
as the starlight I watched, open-eyed
all night. For myself alone, perhaps,
I can say the failure of presence
has been the strangest
of gifts. This morning,
after driving my daughter to school,
I come home, watch the ghost
of mountains glitter on the horizon,
torn, red silk.

—Katherine Smith

Katherine Smith grew up in Knoxville, Tenn. After 15 years living in Paris, Germany, and Virginia, she now resides near Knoxville with her daughter, Justina, and works at Pellissippi State Technical Community College. Her poetry has recently appeared in Many Mountains Moving, Wind, *and the* Banbury Review.

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Courtesy of Mark Givens

A panoramic view of Mark Givens' Southwest Virginia farm in Clover Hollow. For the story about Givens' dedication to keeping the family farm going, see "Mark Givens: The Last Full-Time Farmer in Clover Hollow" by Fred Carlisle, p. 12.

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